

# The Escapade of Roger Drew

FRANK DILNOT



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# The Escapade of Roger Drew

by

FRANK DILNOT



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# Contents

| Chapter |                                        | Page |
|---------|----------------------------------------|------|
| I       | Missing . . . . .                      | 1    |
| II      | Roger's Flight . . . . .               | 9    |
| III     | A Providence Which Shaped His Ends . . | 17   |
| IV      | A Man Friend . . . . .                 | 27   |
| V       | A Study in Rubber . . . . .            | 34   |
| VI      | O Those Women . . . . .                | 41   |
| VII     | Journeying . . . . .                   | 53   |
| VIII    | Business First . . . . .               | 66   |
| IX      | Sir John Magnet . . . . .              | 71   |
| X       | Moral and Intellectual Damage . . . .  | 79   |
| XI      | Spying Out the Land . . . . .          | 87   |
| XII     | Doings at the "Daily Spur" . . . . .   | 94   |
| XIII    | Plunging Deeper . . . . .              | 102  |
| XIV     | Bullion and the Ladies . . . . .       | 110  |
| XV      | Magnet's Day in Paris . . . . .        | 119  |
| XVI     | Roger's Lie . . . . .                  | 129  |
| XVII    | Roger and the Home Secretary . . . .   | 138  |
| XVIII   | Magnet Comes Home . . . . .            | 150  |
| XIX     | Bullion Revolts . . . . .              | 156  |
| XX      | Letters of Note . . . . .              | 164  |
| XXI     | The Garden Party . . . . .             | 171  |
| XXII    | Masquerade . . . . .                   | 177  |
| XXIII   | Unveilings . . . . .                   | 188  |
| XXIV    | Magnet Surprises Roger . . . . .       | 195  |
| XXV     | Dixon Takes a Hand . . . . .           | 202  |
| XXVI    | Dixon Works Fast . . . . .             | 210  |
| XXVII   | Roger at Bay . . . . .                 | 217  |



## CHAPTER I

### MISSING

“IT DOESN'T seem possible that a young man known to so many people should disappear like a piece of thistle-down.”

Mrs. Defensor at breakfast with her daughter in a New York hotel looked up after reading some letters from home.

“Something about Captain Drew?” asked Joan Defensor.

“I was hoping there would be some word from Lamptons in London.”

“Even Lamptons are not omniscient.”

Joan Defensor went on with her work of sorting out steamer labels which lay in a pile by the side of her plate.

“Three trunks in the hold, six things in our cabin.”

Mrs. Defensor watched her.

“I wonder if we are doing right in going back so soon.”

Joan left her seat, and went round the table, and softly smoothed her mother's hair.

“We'll do as you like. I think there is as much chance of finding him there as here.”

There was a likeness between the two women despite the years of age which separated them. Both were tall, both had blue grey eyes with curious points of light in them which might mean reserves of indignation

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

tenderness, or merriment. In the elder woman, too, were memories of the lithe grace which marked the girl. Differences laid emphasis on the similarity. The touch of chestnut in the silver hair of Mrs. Defensor was in contrast with the ebon sheen which was one of the glories of Joan. The abundant smooth black hair went with a certain suave beauty, a silky fresh complexion, a straight nose, with lips full of feeling. Despite an intuitive gentleness there were hidden fires in Joan Defensor. She lacked the tiny dimples which lighted her mother's face in conversation, and gave a suggestion of youth to the woman of sixty. Indeed one had the curious feeling that in some unnameable way the daughter was the older of the two, notwithstanding her radiating youth.

"We'll come across him sooner or later, mother. At the end of the war many young men found they had to strike out into new ways of life. He had travelled before; he went abroad again to find some new method of making a living. It's quite commonplace. We shall certainly find out where he is, presently. And don't forget we may be a little disappointed in Captain Drew when we meet him. We've never seen him."

"We shan't be disappointed in him. How could we be?"

A waiter knocked at the door, and came in to clear away the breakfast things, and the two women walked over to the window.

"A hero is not always handsome and charming, sometimes not even well mannered."

Mrs. Defensor shook her head almost impatiently. "What does it matter? Trifles like that."

## MISSING

“I suppose they are trifles,” said Joan.

Mrs. Defensor smiled but her face went back to seriousness immediately.

“How nice it would have been if Captain Drew had known Richard when he was young. I’m always thinking of Richard when he was a boy. It’s hard to picture him as a grown man.”

“I must have been about nine when he changed from knickerbockers to trousers. I was as proud as he was. I used to wish I was somebody else’s sister so I could have fallen in love with him.”

Mrs. Defensor stood, looking out of the window, and her voice drooped.

“Do you remember how he came in drenched to the shoulders after wading into the canal to save some kittens a man tried to drown?”

“I don’t think I was home then. I shall always remember Devonshire where we were that summer, and how he got up in the night and stole some pears from a garden because I had said I’d love to have some.”

“And Farmer Wren threatened to have him locked up.”

“And you paid about a pound a piece for the pears. I don’t think we could have been so fond of him if he had been a real good boy.”

“He was always good.”

“Do you remember when at eleven he ran away home from the preparatory school? And the fight he had in the second week after you took him back?”

“I didn’t like his fighting, but I wouldn’t have had him a coward.”

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

“He was no coward, mother. He never had any fear of anyone. If he had been more careful in France —”

Joan stopped herself. She always tried to keep her mother’s mind clear of that terrible morning in May when the fateful telegram came to their home in London.

“I wish dad had lived to see him grow up,” she said.

“He was very like your father as a young man, Joan. Oh that terrible war!”

Joan put her arm round her mother’s waist.

“It’s no use worrying. We’ve passed through that. He will always live for us in one way. And we really have a very happy interest in finding out this friend of his. I’m sure we can help him. That’s what Richard would have liked.”

Richard had been life’s core to Mrs. Defensor. His end had done the work which years had left unfinished, and she had gone from what seemed an unchallengeable youthfulness to elderliness in a period of months. Unrest had come upon her. Perfunctorily she carried on her friendships, and she showed a spasmodic tendency to travel — a tendency unknown to her when Richard could come home. She rested on the sadly happy thought of meeting Roger Drew, and when he disappeared without a word an affectionate obsession for the young man who had befriended Richard in his hour of helplessness provided her with an aim for which her daughter was thankful. Lawyers were set to work, without results. She fretted, and Joan was glad, for anxiety was better than apathy. Money

## MISSING

and effort were freely spent. The reason why the repeated invitation of her old friend Mrs. Burton for a visit to her Virginia home across the Atlantic was accepted lay in the tardy discovery that eight months previously Roger Drew had sailed for America.

“You don’t suppose he’s dead.”

The two women were busy with their preparations for their departure when Mrs. Defensor thrust the suggestion a little fearfully at her daughter.

“His aunt would certainly have heard of it if he were dead,” said Joan. “We write to Bath every month. His aunt has promised to communicate with us directly she gets in touch about him.”

“I wish he knew we were searching.”

“He probably does. He’s avoiding us. He has no need to. I suppose his idea is that a devoted mother and a very plain daughter will feel they have a claim by old associations to enmesh him into matrimony.”

Joan laughed heartily at the thought.

“He need have no fear. We have had far too much bother about this young man. He is not for me thank you. Probably he will be just as evasive as a husband.”

“Joan, I don’t like to hear you joke about him that way. He may be in straits. He may have some reason for keeping away that we know nothing about.”

“Just trying to avoid two meddlesome women,” said Joan, “that’s probably the explanation. He has no desire to be done good to against his will.”

“I doubt if he even knows we are looking for him,” said Mrs. Defensor. “Why should he? He was a friend of Richard’s during the war, but after Richard’s death he didn’t think there was any need to see us.”

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

“He must have known we were interested in him.”

“I fancy he is a rather careless sort of young man.”

“I only wish we had a photograph.”

For the first time that morning Mrs. Defensor smiled.

Joan's eyes sparkled but not with fun. “I admire Roger Drew, I respect him, I am as grateful as you are for all that he did for Richard. But from what I learned of him from Richard's letters he is one of the last men on earth about whom I should have sentimental notions. When I fall in love it will be with a man, strong, self-contained, capable of great affection, steady as a rock. I don't want a butterfly.”

“I wonder,” said Mrs. Defensor.

“All the same,” said Joan, “I'm just as anxious as you are to find out Roger Drew, and to do what we can for him. Do you know I think we have been rather impractical.”

“We have asked all our friends. We have written to a lot of people. I really don't know what more we could have done. We can't exactly pursue him like a criminal.”

“That depends how much we want to find him. We might have put an advertisement in the paper.”

“I don't think that would be very nice.”

But Joan became warm about her new suggestion. Why had they not thought of such practical means before? There were the private detectives as well as the newspapers; other expedients began to frame themselves. Her arguments had an unexpected result, for presently Mrs. Defensor said, “Joan, I don't believe

## MISSING

we should be right in going away, leaving Captain Drew here, without learning anything about him.”

“We’ve made all arrangements to go, mother. You know you want to get back home.”

“We ought to leave no stone unturned.”

Joan had a picture of her mother waiting on in New York, exhausting herself with anticipation, sapped by the daily announcement that there was no fresh news, deceiving herself with hopes of seeing a young man who might well enough be on the way to Buenos Aires or Australia. In England there would be the mild distractions of old friends, the thousand links of home. Joan bent herself to the task of persuasion, and she showed how the work of enquiry might go on in their absence, how the cables could keep them in touch, and how if necessary they could swiftly return to America. She was planning methods even as she talked, and presently she won her mother over.

It was two hours later that Merton J. Connick of Connick and Brown, the enquiry agents, was shown into the apartment of the Defensors. A big shouldered man with dull eyes he listened carefully to the story, inserting a deft query here and there.

“I don’t see that there should be any real difficulty. If you had come to us on your arrival in America you would certainly have been in touch with Captain Drew before now, I don’t know how much we can find out in two days, but I’ll promise you that within a week you shall have news.”

“I wonder if we’ve done right,” said Mrs. Defensor after Connick had left.

“I’m quite sure we have,” said Joan.

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

“I would hate to make him feel uncomfortable.”

“I have an impression that it would take more than the inquiries of a firm of private detectives to make Roger Drew feel uncomfortable.”

Joan was in a glow when Connick was announced in the midst of their packing on the succeeding day. He had come with news, and he was fired with a sense of pleasing efficiency. “I have some information,” he said, “Mr. Roger Drew came to this city from Cincinnati a week ago. He stayed at the Blank Club till the day before yesterday, when he left, saying that he was spending a day or two with friends.”

Questions descended on the detective. Where could he be found? Was there any possibility of further news before the “Latian” sailed next day? Would he send a wireless message to the ship if anything came out after their departure? Was there a hint of the friends with whom he was staying? Could not the club give some further information about him?

The detective took from his pocket-wallet a cutting from a New York newspaper of that morning, and with the immobility of professional pride handed it over to Mrs. Defensor. The paragraph concerned a commercial project, and it ended with the statement that a Mr. Roger Drew would within a few weeks be leaving for Europe in charge of American interests.

“It’s quite evident he’s here,” said Connick.

## CHAPTER II

### ROGER'S FLIGHT

TEN days before Mrs. Defensor and Joan discussed Roger Drew in New York a man of about thirty-four, with dark hair and reflective blue eyes, standing at the window of a hotel in Cincinnati, might have been supposed to be watching with the interest of a stranger the truly American scene below, the low-browed street cars, the hurrying groups of business men in soft-brimmed hats, the old negro with the muffler round his neck gazing into the cigar store, the raucous off-handed newspaper boys, the towering oppressive regularity of the business offices opposite with their thousand windows reaching skyward and stretching unbrokenly along the street beyond range of sight from the hotel. It was a picture which might well pique contrast in the eye of a Londoner, but Roger Drew was looking through and beyond the things in front of him, surveying with a sense of disturbance his life, or at least that part of his life which was immediately ahead. Introspection had no place in Roger Drew. He was a young man of action, and in the course of adventure in many lands had rarely allowed doubt to halt him, much less disturb him and make him uncomfortable. And now by some twist of outside circumstances and his own emotions he was in a state of mental indecision, annoyance with himself, and

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

amusement at his own feelings. He was looking blindly at that Cincinnati street.

He turned from the window, and rang his bell. Three minutes later there was a knock at the door, and John, the negro bellboy, who waited on him, came into the room. A smiling friendly person was John, who in the course of a month had come to be quite at home with this whimsical Englishman, who, with serious face said funny things, asked queer questions, and never gave less than a quarter as a tip. Roger Drew looked at him abstractedly.

“You rang, sir?”

“John, tell me what’s on at the theatres. I would like to go somewhere tonight.”

“What do you want, sir?” There is good vaudeville at the Grand.”

Roger shook his head.

“A New York company is in a society play in the theatre on the square.”

“Society play?” said Roger Drew doubtfully.

“In the theatre right over here there was a new piece opened last night called ‘Nothing But The Truth’. I heard Mr. White, the manager, say it was very good, sir.”

Roger Drew looked at John, and apparently weighed up the comparative attractions of the entertainments, and then he suddenly said, “John, have you ever been in love?”

John grinned.

“About every six months, sir.”

“Yes,” said Roger Drew thoughtfully, “that’s the

## ROGER'S FLIGHT

difficulty. What would you do, John, if you were in love with two women at once?"

John encased himself in a smile which expressed doubt, pleasure, incredulity, and sympathy.

"And suppose you had two women in love with you at the same time, John?"

John buried himself still deeper in that all enveloping smile.

"Yes, I see your difficulty," said Roger. "The point is how to settle the matter satisfactorily to oneself, and there are only two methods which occur to me at the moment, one is a good dinner with a pint of sparkling Burgundy, and that is out of the question when one is suffering from the blessings of a prohibition country, and the other is to throw oneself into the society of further pretty and attractive women and to trust to Providence. That is more or less out of the question, too, thank goodness."

All this was a little beyond John, and his smile took on a touch of bewilderment.

"And so, John, I turn to the drama, which may or may not clarify the emotions as well as the brain."

"Perhaps, Mr. Drew, you'd like to go to the vaudeville tonight?"

"On the contrary, John, you made a suggestion of the utmost value. 'Nothing But The Truth' is guaranteed to be amusing. I will go and see what humour is to be derived from 'Nothing But The Truth'. Bring me up a pitcher of ice water, and ask the people down stairs to get me a ticket for the theatre."

There is bound to be something unexpected in the actions of a young man of thirty-four who has among

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

his qualities that of initiative, and who for years past has been alternating between periods of drift and spasms of enthusiastic effort. The unexpectedness is likely to be interrupted by embarrassment, and embarrassment had at intervals lain heavy on Roger Drew. It was frequently of a financial character. Now and again it was of a different kind.

Roger Drew walked out into the street with the full intention of going to the theatre, but by the time he had covered the hundred yards to the corner of the square he had decided to pay a visit to the Philipsons. He was very fond of Marie Philipson, but the difficulty in which he found himself was that Marie, with the devotion and romance of twenty-two, was fonder of him than he was of her. At least that was the remorseful thought of Roger, who, true to his kind, would have probably been helplessly in love with Marie if she had not displayed her own feelings so clearly. As it was Roger in her society was never without an impulse of deep tenderness, which made Marie always a possibility. Since Marie's father was a lawyer only comfortably off, and Marie had no money of her own, and Roger himself was always on the edge of poverty, there could be no question of an immediate union, and cowardly Roger wondered if his affections would stand a protracted and indefinite strain. All these considerations, with one other not yet mentioned, had caused him to decide to leave Cincinnati at short notice for New York. He was going on the following day. And then at the last moment some dormant sense of courtesy, of kindness, sent him to say goodbye instead of writing an excuse.

## ROGER'S FLIGHT

Roger came to this decision in face of the fact that little Blanche Arthur, for whom he had at times felt a real touch of passion, was to see him off at the station next morning. She was a dark haired little thing with lustrous eyes, who dabbled in painting, and who would one day be an heiress in a small way, for her mother owned part of one of Cincinnati's principal streets. Blanche Arthur, like Marie Philipson, had swept upon him unawares. In the course of his month's stay in Cincinnati, Roger had made many pleasant acquaintances, and was a popular figure in what may be designated a section of leading society in the city. Slightly enamoured of both girls from the start, he had at an early date committed his affections to each, and now, having roused emotions which put him in practical difficulties, he was flying from both.

Roger went into a restaurant for dinner, and then made for the Philipson's apartment, where he was received with a hearty grip of the hand from Mr. Philipson, a welcoming sentence from Mrs. Philipson, and smiling vivacity and dancing eyes on the part of Marie. The high spirits of the latter depressed him. He must get his news over quickly.

"Behold the distressed visitor," said Roger. "I have come to say goodbye."

"Goodbye?" echoed Marie.

"Telegram tonight. You know I told you the firm I am representing might want me at any time. I'm leaving tomorrow."

"You'll be coming back?" said Mrs. Philipson.

"Certainly," said Roger, lying glibly. "I don't know when, but assuredly before very long."

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

“What a shame you have to go!” said Marie, and Roger knew how much lay behind the girl’s words.

He stayed nearly an hour, and was very glad that he had only the opportunity of being alone with Marie for three minutes, when she took him into her father’s room to look at a golf prize she had won the day before. Roger knew that if he stayed longer this bright-eyed girl would so manage her parents that there would be a prolonged time together alone with each other.

“What is going to be your address in New York?” asked Marie. He gave the name of his club.

“Roger,” she said, “I feel as if I’d known you all my life.”

“Same here,” said he, unflinchingly.

“You won’t forget us?” she went on.

“The question is whether you’ll forget me.”

“It’s not possible, Roger. You’ll really come back?”

He patted her shoulder. “What a question, what a question!”

“Couldn’t I come and see you off tomorrow?”

“Two of my men friends will be at the station,” said the mendacious Roger, “but of course if you like to come ——”

“Oh no!” she said with sudden hesitation.

“Well then it’s goodbye for the present.”

He had never kissed her up till then, and he put his arm around her with the idea of fulfilling his part, a very pleasant and seductive part as he looked into her bright eyes. She slipped away from him. “Not

## ROGER'S FLIGHT

yet!" she said. He bent low, and touched the tips of her fingers with his lips.

Five minutes later he was in the street, feeling that he had virtually made an offer of marriage to Marie, and trying to forget it. He pitied Marie from the bottom of his heart. He felt himself a thorough scoundrel. And then with an effort of will he tried to think of what he was going to say to Blanche Arthur at the station the next morning.

Blanche was less difficult than he anticipated, because, having purchased his ticket beforehand, he was able to calculate carefully the time of his arrival in the taxicab, and to leave himself just a minute and a half before going on to the platform. A little figure in a gingham frock, looking particularly youthful and entrancing, stood waiting for him. He almost wished that he had come earlier. "Oh, Roger," she said, "you've got to go!"

"No escape," he said with an effort at forced cheerfulness. She held on to his arm.

"I've got to make bread and butter, you know," he said. "I only wish you were coming with me."

"I have a surprise for you," said Blanche, "a little thought for you to take on the journey."

"Yes?" There was genuine anticipation in Roger as he looked at her. "I'm coming back soon you know," he said.

"How soon?"

"About six weeks, or a couple of months." They were near the barrier now, and Roger was feeling in his waistcoat pocket for his ticket.

"It may be that we shall never be parted again

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

after that.” He really meant it for the moment, as he looked down at her and saw what a sweet little thing she was.

Blanche smiled to herself, and Roger knew it was a smile of acquiescence, and his heart smote him. “What’s this thought of yours?” he said.

“Write me when you get fixed up in New York will you?”

“Of course.”

Passengers behind were pushing up against Roger as he stood in the gateway.

“My thought is,” said Blanche quickly, “that you’ll probably see me long before that six weeks is up. Goodbye.” She turned and fled before he could say another word.

Roger passed on down the platform full of thought. He was not entirely satisfied with himself.

### CHAPTER III

#### A PROVIDENCE WHICH SHAPED HIS ENDS

THERE had been many a sad shake of the head at the country vicarage in Gloucestershire, where Roger's aunt ruled a docile husband, and two strapping daughters. If he was not labelled as having gone completely to the bad, he was at least looked upon as one who had thrown away opportunity, and might soon place himself beyond the pale. Mrs. Bradley-Towner (and the Rev. John Bradley-Towner) felt that Roger was a reckless person who was inaccessible to the call of responsibility. Had he chosen a different way of life he might have known the best of people, he might have found a quiet and dignified position in a Government office; George Johnson, Mrs. Towner's second cousin, together with his late father's friends in Lombard Street might easily have put him into a bank, or conceivably have started him in some way on the Stock Exchange. It was all very sad. Plainly could it be seen by those who knew anything of the world that Roger by years of steady work could have become a respected member of respectable society with a house at Beckenham or at Hampstead. Instead of which he was a rover without ties, without ambitions, devoid of prospects. Mrs. Bradley-Towner used to throw up her hands in a gesture which friends recognized as that of affectionate despair.

Roger at Cambridge had taken his degree at

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

twenty-two, scraped through with the crowd, and his distinction in the University resided in the fact that he had been the leader in the famous hoax by which the authorities had been led to believe that the visit of an Asiatic potentate had been advanced a couple of days. Dignitaries with all the ceremonial befitting the occasion had received Roger Drew, disguised by himself and his fellow undergraduates, into the likeness of the potentate in question. The incident nearly brought his university career to a sudden finish, especially as it was the culmination of a disjointed series of adventures which had no connection with higher education.

He had left Cambridge three months, when the death of his father, set him adrift, practically alone in the world, with an income of about four hundred pounds a year. His aunt in that Gloucestershire vicarage essayed to take him in hand in a motherly albeit somewhat domineering sort of a way, largely ignorant of the temperament of her nephew and with chaffing carelessness he bade goodbye to her influence.

It would have been difficult for Roger Drew himself to have explained the impulses which took him first to Moscow as the representative of a Lancashire firm making agricultural implements, and second to the south of France as the amateur representative of a London newspaper which specialized in society doings at the holiday resorts on the Mediterranean. In both cases he failed, failed because of a joyous energy which sent him off at tangents. It is no excuse that his vivacity reared him friends and devotees of both sexes. He wanted to make good but not enough to undergo drudgery. He journeyed to South Africa to secure a

## A PROVIDENCE WHICH SHAPED HIS ENDS

fortune in gold mining, and discovered that modern gold mining is an occupation not at all adventurous, and just about as open to youthful initiative as work in an English cotton factory or steel foundry. Later he went to the United States as half companion, half tutor to a rich youth who was being sent to California for his health, and while in the middle of a boredom that was rapidly becoming intolerable the war broke on the world. Within six weeks Roger was back in London and had joined up. He went out to France to win his country a speedy victory, and discovered that war was a plodding and remorseless thing, touched with tragedy, but having more of mud and of blood than fame; and carrying ceaseless toil and sameness. From corporal to sergeant and then, following an engagement in which he was one of twenty-five men who were left out of one hundred and twenty, he got his commission. It was at the second battle of Ypres that he received a piece of shell in his thigh which incapacitated him for seven months, and gave him the limp which was never to leave him throughout life. After that there were terrible months on the Somme, terrible in their uncertainty, their immobility, and the sense of everlastingness. Long afterwards he spoke of that period as a nightmare, split into sections by furious weeks of fighting in which to his increasing surprise he never received a hurt. He used to laugh as his own cowardice, the common cowardice of all sensitive and imaginative men, and was not afraid to laugh openly at it, even before the exploit which secured him the D. S. O.

So he may be seen at the end of the war something

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

of a derelict with a small gratuity from the government, with half his income gone as the result of fluctuations of the Stock Exchange. He sailed across the Atlantic to search the broad United States for opportunities. He had a couple of articles accepted in New York newspapers, and at the invitation of a well-known editor wrote a witty description of an American's trip to Europe, which was published in a weekly review. Then he had six articles rejected in succession, and he gave up the idea of journalism. He did some hack work for one of the moving picture firms, but this also quickly petered out.

Roger Drew was a young man of resource, and not lacking courage. The situation at the moment called up his reserves, for he had exactly one hundred and fifty-five dollars in his pocket, he was due to receive a hotel bill that would amount to about seventy dollars, and his quarterly income from England would not be available for a month. In his own country he would not have dreamed of the expedient which came to him, indeed even in America he had an initial qualm but he made a wry face, and then grasped the nettle. In his first search for occupation he had made himself known to a lecture agency, and he went again. There was a friendly hand shake but no business.

"They don't want highbrow talk unless you are very well known," said the agent. "Now if you could do something amusing."

"Amusing?" said Roger.

"I am scouring New York by telephone trying to find the right kind of entertainment for a big private

## A PROVIDENCE WHICH SHAPED HIS ENDS

school in New Jersey for tonight. The man who was going has fallen sick."

"What is it they want?" asked Roger.

"A man who can tell stories, a conjurer, a ventriloquist, anything of that sort so long as he can do the thing well."

Roger's mind flickered back to his University days when his ventriloquial pranks had got him into trouble more than once. He remembered how he was the star at a smoking concert one evening, then a smile crossed his lips at the thought of his aunt.

That night Roger Drew went to New Jersey, and for the fee of a hundred dollars delighted a crowd of young people for nearly an hour and a half. One thing led to another. By the time Christmas came he found himself engaged as the light relief in a Lyceum tour for which he received one hundred and fifty dollars a week and his railway fare. This set him on his feet. His tour finished in the spring at a little city about twenty miles from Cincinnati, and he went on to the latter place to recover himself and to think about his future.

That he should drift into the imposture of being a business man was the most natural thing for Roger when he came across pleasant friends who might not have been quite so cordial had they known he was a travelling ventriloquist. He told truthfully about his life in England, but he saw no reason for revealing all his private doings in emergency since his arrival in the United States. His lecture tour had been a hard one. He lazed away a week or two, tasted once more the luxury of flirtation, and then one beautiful morning

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

in early June found himself on the way to New York fleeing from the cloud of deception which he had roused.

If the conscience of Roger Drew gave him some trouble on the journey his discomfort was increased by the very practical anxiety of the situation. To escape from one woman whom he was fond of was a task which might have depressed him, but to escape from two filled him with a kind of despair which was only to be borne by his particular temperament because he could postpone the evil day. And the curious thing was — he wanted to break with neither. He liked each too well for that. He told himself he must be a man, and put aside these weak preferences of his, especially as there were two of them. The painfulness of his position lay in the whole hearted devotion of the girls. He cursed his facility in obtaining their affection, for he felt that each of them would go to the limit in securing the happy consummation of what they believed to be a mutual attraction. He struggled vainly with the situation for the best part of an hour, and then found temporary relief in the magazines and papers which he had brought into the train with him. He was like that where women were concerned. He looked difficulties in the face, and then passed by them.

Roger Drew had plenty of time for reflection in the train to New York, and though he forced difficulties away from him in the first few hours he was presently drawn back to himself again, and fell into a somewhat disgusted review of his past and an unpleasant survey of the days to come. The entanglement with the two Cincinnati girls was but the culminating touch. He

## A PROVIDENCE WHICH SHAPED HIS ENDS

had flitted from flower to flower before now, but amorous worries were trifles in the progress of a man swiftly hurrying to fortune. Recently he had realized a change coming over himself, an understanding that he was really a failure, and, with this, the shadow of a fear that he would presently have to take up that routine work in a London office which he had contemptuously thrust aside a dozen years ago. The thought was hard to permit. Was he to begin the junior plodding at thirty-four which he had run away from at twenty-two? He felt a little shiver.

His total capital was about two hundred pounds, and apart from this all he had was a yearly income of about the same sum. And threaded through these practical reflections was the galling unshakable knowledge that he a man of parts at thirty-four was of no account. In the lowest aim of a man of action, that of making a competency, he had proved incapable. Roger did not spare himself. He found some extenuation in the war which had taken years out of the formative period of his life, but he swiftly dismissed that excuse and went to the root of the matter. Instability, he told himself, coupled with an irrational energy had been his undoing. Roger was unjust to his own qualities, for while he had fled from the beaten track and spent himself in sudden outbursts, yet he had within him the power of concentration never fully tested, and he had a quick eye for character, and somewhere behind the humorous lines of his face there was courage — altogether a man well armed.

Probably it was an inkling of this which originated his disgust. He had wasted himself without having

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

any of the special tastes of the waster. He had not however reached the point where he saw that the secret of his failure lay in his lack of motive, that he had not been quite poor enough to suffer for money, quite imaginative enough to fight for fame, nor heroic enough to battle for some ideal.

Nevertheless he had for some time past experienced a sense of aimlessness; and there had been growing on him a dread of the years ahead. The prospect of semi-poverty was much more serious to him at thirty-four than at twenty-two — at which age he had perceived how simple and easy it would be after a few years to secure a fortune, become prominent, gather for life a circle of congenial and distinguished friends. Instead of that he found himself in his thirty-fifth year travelling between Cincinnati and New York with two hundred pounds in worldly wealth, with no friends that mattered.

Roger was irritable. As he walked to the dining-car his lined face grew older, the shaking, swaying, bumping train so different he told himself in a sudden home sickness from the smaller, smoother and swifter main line trains in England. His eyes were pleasant as he sat down, but inwardly he was swearing at the glass of water in front of him on the dining table. This was the time if ever there was one, for a pint of wine. He ate sparingly, for he had begun to rocket through moods which had been growing upon him for months. He drank two glasses of the hated ice water, and in his abstraction he could hardly have told it from Sauterne. After dinner instead of going to the smoking car as usual he went back to his place in the pull-

## A PROVIDENCE WHICH SHAPED HIS ENDS

man, asked the conductor to put up a small table in front of his seat, took some note paper from his bag, and began on two letters. He wrote to Marie Philipson and to Blanche Arthur at Cincinnati and told them he was unworthy of them, that he was desperately poor, and asked each of them to forget him. It took him an hour to write those two short notes, and when he had written them he tore them up, they were so impossibly brutal.

There were the makings of a new man in Roger Drew when at the Pennsylvania Station in New York he took a taxicab up to his old hotel midway between Forty-Second Street and the Park. The anxiety and uncertainty of past months had reached a head, and his will was centering itself in a way which brought a warmth to him. He had faced the encompassing facts and had formed a determination. He knew that while he was getting a foot-hold he would have enough money to keep himself from the dead line of poverty — his knowledge of the world told him that he was a fortunate man to have the chance. He had but vague ideas on his line of work, but his decision to stand up steadily to fate and fortune was the thing that mattered. He had a good many acquaintances in New York, business men at the Club, including a millionaire banker, and the vice president of one of the oil combines, both of whom had been attracted by his whimsicality; some of the leading New York newspaper men were in his circle; he had been a welcome guest at two or three fashionable homes. And so he knew quite well he could dig up opportunity if he gave a week or two to the task, and he kept an open mind as to which side

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

of the Atlantic should claim his services — though he had a homing instinct which made him hope for something back in England. Surely there were Anglo-American enterprises into which he could force himself.

With carefulness he could live six weeks in New York, and then have enough for a first class passage to Liverpool, should it be necessary to make the crossing. When he reached the other side the quarterly instalment of his income would be due. This calculation in itself was the first sign of Roger's new life; the next indication was his scheme of initial procedure — to visit within the next few days all his acquaintances of business standing in order to examine as far as he could what might be his field of value. He encouraged no dreams. He expected a good many disappointments, he knew it would probably be at least a week before he could get on the track of a special activity.

The encouraging experience of steadfast adventurers is that while openings for good fortune are persistently absent when looked for under a kind of desperate inaction, yet as soon as a determined effort is made in settled and hardworking directions the so-called happy chance in some entirely unlooked for field opens to view. The opportunity is in no sense the result of effort. The recipient can not pat virtue on the back. He wonders at the perversity which averted from him irrelevant luck till he began a plodding path. What happened to Roger Drew on the first night he went to his club had no relation whatever to the plans he had made.

## CHAPTER IV

### A MAN FRIEND

**R**ANSOM the secretary of the club met Roger entering the hall, gave him a hearty hand-shake, demanded explanation of his absence, and spread welcome round him. Roger was a man always popular in the club, and the Blanks in New York had made rather a pet of him, partly because he was so unlike the usual conception of an Englishman, with his unpretentiousness and searching witty tongue. His thin figure and his lean lined face was always a welcome sight in the lounge, in the dining-room, or in the card-room.

“Bill Diggs was asking about you yesterday,” said Ransom, “and Dixon was here three nights ago trying to find you to go up to his house for dinner with a party. Dixon is in the lounge now playing dominoes with some of the boys.”

Roger strolled through the lounge to the little green table at the far corner where Bronson the editor of the “Daily Light,” and Judge Coley, and Scarsdale the accountant, and Dixon were playing for a dollar a game and a cent a point. There were exclamations and the dominoes were forgotten for the moment.

“Hoping you had all reformed,” said Roger.

“I’m well on the way,” said Judge Coley, “I have lost steadily every night for three weeks in succession.”

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

“Having amassed two months’ winnings in order to toy with us,” said Bronson.

“Sit down here, and cut in after this game,” said Dixon. “We’re sure glad to see you back.”

“There’s been too much uplift in the club,” said Scarsdale as the party sat down at the table again. “We need you.”

“The grave moral responsibilities of this nation — ” began Roger but was stopped further comment by a blow on the shoulder from Dixon which nearly took him out of his chair.

“That’s the way we serious Englishmen are treated,” he said. “We try to live up to you and then — ”

Judge Coley grinned, and Scarsdale who was busily mixing up the dominoes on the table for a fresh distribution said, “And we lose ourselves in wonder as to why you darned Britishers get the better of other countries. Cut for partners.” He turned over a domino.

When the game broke up an hour and a half later, Dixon took Roger by the arm. He said: “Come upstairs to supper. Tell me all about yourself.” And Roger, who had curiously enough allowed his good friend Dixon to slip from his mind in his self-examination and his plans of the day before, proceeded in the course of the meal to give Dixon some idea of his position and his program.

Arthur Dixon was a man of forty with wide-set eyes and a jaw that was a little too square for pleasantness, but with a deep and friendly voice and eyes that immediately made you a friend or forever put you

## A MAN FRIEND

among mere acquaintances. Some men are intrinsically and irretrievably negligible. Dixon would have been a man of account even if had not a penny in the world. As a matter of fact he was a remarkably successful business person, and, in character with some individuals of his type had been attracted by the light-tongued frivolity of the Englishman, and unknown to Roger Drew his first-liking had deepened into a real regard for reasons which are buried deep in the secret and unspoken associations of personality. Roger had felt his touch of sympathy before, and tonight he was to learn a good deal more of the link between them. The worry, the embarrassments, and the culminating decisions of the past twenty-four hours had made Roger more than usually susceptible to the kindly words of a strong man like Arthur Dixon, and that was how it was he was led to tell more of his personal position than his native reticence would have approved of in advance.

Dixon talked about himself, too. "I had a little party of six to dinner a few nights ago," he said, "and I was anxious to get hold of you. I came down to the club to see if you had got back."

"Was it some special celebration?"

"I had a couple of my directors there," said Dixon, "we are marking the end of our third year, a wonderful year for us. We made eleven million dollars profit."

"Automobile industry, isn't it?"

"Yes. While we do not build any special car we are nearly if not quite the largest firm in the world

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

engaged in making various parts. 'Fundamental Motorities, Ltd.,' means a good deal, Roger."

"As I have never had a car and have not the slightest prospect of ever owning one, 'Fundamental Motorities, Ltd.,' means nothing to me except in the person of its president."

Dixon laughed. "You'll be one of our big customers yet, Roger."

The Englishman looked up at his friend with a sudden thought.

"Tell me, Dixon, something about your career. Here are you at the head of a huge concern, and a rich man, and you are not very much older than myself. I suppose you have devoted your life to the technical side of this automobile business."

Dixon smiled. "I've run a car for ten years," he said, "but I've only been in the business four years, and I've been president of this corporation for the last three years."

"It's weird to me," said Roger. "What did you do before that?"

"Seven years ago I was one of the directors of a peanut trust in Philadelphia. I left that after eighteen months to become the president of a chewing gum company in Chicago. Each of those concerns showed big profit. Four years ago I became chairman of 'Fundamental Motorities, Ltd.,' and a year later was made its president."

There was no sign of exultation; he spoke in a slow matter of fact way that went straight home to Roger Drew's imagination. He looked at his friend for a moment and then said, "There is a kind of fairyland

## A MAN FRIEND

atmosphere in the bigger business world of the United States.”

“It doesn’t seem so wonderful to me as to you,” said Dixon.

Roger went on, “You are an expert in business, and I am by way of being a connoisseur in human beings. I don’t suppose you dabble in that much, Dixon.”

There was a pucker at the corner of Dixon’s wide, firm mouth. “I sometimes get an impression about men that helps.”

There fell upon Roger the knowledge that despite his previous respect for Dixon, he had under-rated him.

Dixon looked at the Englishman, wide-eyed and thoughtfully. “Men are always a gamble,” he said. “They are like a poker hand. Four aces may be beaten, but it’s a fool who won’t gamble on four aces.”

Roger knew that he was to find a new development in the American.

“I have formed some impressions about you,” said Dixon. “Shall we go down to the library? I want to have a talk.”

When they were both in comfortable chairs in the corner of the big book-lined room on the second floor, Dixon leaned back and said, “I’m going to talk business to you. But first let me say that I am not a machine, I can feel a man when he’s big enough. I know something about you but I’m going to give you a very big compliment. You may fail. Listen to this. I don’t mind if you do fail.”

Roger sat forward, and all the expression had gone out of his face as he looked across at Dixon.

## THE ESCAPE OF ROGER DREW

“You could go and see big influential people in England if you chose to?”

“I suppose so.”

“If the inducement or the prospects were good enough would you be prepared to go across quite soon?”

Roger nodded.

Dixon deliberated for a moment. “You say you have never owned an automobile. Can you drive one?”

“I’ve made that much preparation for prosperity.”

Dixon drummed on the arm of his chair with his knuckles.

“Will you come round, and see me in my office tomorrow morning at eleven-thirty. I want to think over matters, but the probability is I shall have something definite to put before you.”

“I will be very pleased. I am looking out for some opportunity. I want to be honest though, with a friend like you. I have no real business connections. I would hate to let you down.”

Dixon relaxed a little, and his eyes lighted up. “I know,” he said, “I’m not acting blindly. I believe I’m going to take a chance with you, and whatever happens I shan’t grouse.”

The sparkle in Dixon’s eye lightened Roger. “You are turning me topsy-turvy,” he said.

“Not I. I’ll say this for you, it isn’t easy to turn you topsy-turvy.”

“Oh, isn’t it, by Heck!”

“I have seen you win at poker, I have seen you

## A MAN FRIEND

lose at poker, I have seen you insulted, I have seen you insult other people.”

“A sure foundation,” said Roger.

“I have known worse foundations,” replied Dixon.

As Roger went down to the office to see if there were any letters by the last mail and took a cigarette from his case, he found that his hand was shaking a little, a sign of excitement which disgusted and surprised him.

He discovered a letter awaiting him from Mrs. Philipson which ran as follows:

“Dear Mr. Drew:—

We are leaving for New York three days from now, and shall be at the Hotel Battersea on Wednesday. Both Marie and I are looking forward to seeing you. Won't you please come and call on us on Thursday?

Yours very sincerely,

Alice M. Philipson.”

Roger put on his overcoat and hat and set out to walk to his hotel. “Things are moving,” he said to himself.

## CHAPTER V

### A STUDY IN RUBBER

NEXT morning at breakfast Roger found his lightness of spirit was tempered by the thought that Marie Philipson intended to descend on him in New York. That he deserved the visit did not lessen his discomfort, and he debated within himself as to the best means of getting out of the thicket. A letter seemed hopeless, and yet if it came to a meeting he was not sure of himself, was not certain that he could face the protests, and tears of outraged love. He might even have to marry her. And while he shivered he told himself it would serve him right. Avoidance, delay were hardly within the prospect. Confound Cincinnati, and all its inhabitants! Well, it was a day or so ahead yet, and inspiration might seize him as it had in the past. He put the difficulty resolutely behind him as he went down town to Dixon's office.

Arthur Dixon shot a word of greeting, drew a chair to the corner of his desk, and in his first three phrases was deep in business.

"Have you any idea of the size of the automobile industry?"

"Vaguely immense, that's all it means to me," said Roger.

"I want you to follow me for a minute. The automobiles in America number about nine millions, say one for every twelve persons, men, women and children

## A STUDY IN RUBBER

in the country, or to put it in another way there is one automobile for every third family here. The automobile is one of the integral factors in our social life; it is part of everyday, just like breakfast or clothes or railway trains. That's one reason why I'm in the motor industry instead of some sectional undertaking. It's bigger, it has more openings, it is far more lucrative. Any definite improvement, any innovation which makes for increased safety or comfort or convenience means a fortune."

"A very large fortune," agreed Roger.

"One of our most important departments," went on Dixon, "is that in which we are continually making experiments, and trying day after day to find new things which will be of value to those who use automobiles. Some of our adjustments and devices have already been very profitable. I come now to real business. And you won't mind my giving you a word of caution. If you do not come in and take a part in our work I want you to forget what I am now going to tell you, because it involves a trade secret of considerable importance."

"You may trust me," said Roger quietly.

"One of the main difficulties not yet overcome in connection with automobiles is that in wet weather cars are liable to slip, and it doesn't matter whether the road surface is of wood or cement or mud there is the greasiness and danger, though in different degrees."

"I know it full well," said Roger.

"Rubber tires have been made in all kinds of patterns, and the corrugations that have been moulded

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

into them, while they are of assistance, have never really met the case. Then the chains that are put on in wet weather are also some help. But neither chains nor any known species of pattern has overcome the liability to side-slip when the surface is wet. The difficulty is inherent in the use of rubber for tires. If you have ever had rubber heels on your shoes you will know how careful you have to be in preventing yourself from slipping up on a wet pavement."

"Have you eliminated rubber from tires?"

"No, but we are on the track in another direction. Rubber has to be treated before it is of use. Pure rubber for instance can be dissolved by benzol but the introduction of sulphur and other things makes it undissolvable, and it is this amalgam which we use in the case of white rubber for tires and other purposes. It has been present in the minds of scientists that some treatment, some new ingredient might so affect rubber tires as to do away with the slipperiness in wet weather. There has been a long and disappointing process of investigation and experiment. A hundred times we have failed, but two months ago we hit on a discovery that promised results, and it is only necessary to tell you at this point that the basis of the discovery is the introduction of a hitherto untried chemical, a rather expensive one, in the manufacture of the rubber. I should say in parenthesis that we have our own rubber plant and make our own tires. We have progressed rapidly in the last six weeks, and a month ago the trick was ours."

Dixon in a sudden access of enthusiastic energy struck the desk heavily with his fist.

## A STUDY IN RUBBER

“By heaven, Drew, we have something colossal in this discovery. Here is the thing in a nutshell. The tires are to all appearances exactly the same as before but as soon as they become damp a chemical process is set up, which automatically and inevitably gives the surface of the rubber a new kind of friction, of adhesiveness, and practically prevents any possibility of side slipping.”

“A big thing,” said Roger.

“The biggest for years. The extraordinary value of the discovery lies in its automatic nature. The wet surface of the road which produces side-slip sets up action in the rubber which prevents side-slip. This peculiar quality lasts all the time the tires are wet.”

Dixon got up and walked about the room with quick strides. “I have told you the secret Roger, and I needn’t say what it means to us here in the United States where the motor car industry is such a tremendous business. But it will also be of importance in other countries, in your own country of Britain where the automobile industry is large although of course not so great as here. I suppose you have a hint of what I’m going to propose to you.”

“I think I see it,” said Roger.

“We shall need a man to handle the discovery in Britain. It has occurred to me that you might have the opportunity.”

Roger looked steadily at his friend and said, “Is this merely out of kindness of heart?”

“I am sincerely glad to put this thing your way, but I should not do so, if I did not believe you were capable of helping us as well as yourself.”

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

“What about your London depot? Why don’t you hand it over to them?”

“I will tell you why. Our London place is a distributing centre with good men in charge for the actual job in hand but I’m not quite sure that the manager there would be the best person for this purpose. There is another reason, secrecy is advisable. Once our London office hears about this thing it will be impossible to prevent the trade there getting knowledge about it. It is all very well to say it could be prevented but I know it could not.”

“I am not what you would call a real business man,” said Roger, “and I tell you straight, Dixon, I think too much of you to take on the thing unless I am satisfied in my own mind that I can put it over for you.”

“That’s the kind of answer I wanted. I haven’t any doubt of you. You have shown me something of your connections. I know the kind of fellow you are, and the bigness of any project is likely to stimulate you rather than to frighten you. You are a pretty good judge of men. You are to be trusted. What I propose to you is that you should go over say in about a couple of weeks time, with a general description of this invention, and having with you on the steamer several sets of tires which as soon as you arrive you have fitted to various makes of automobiles for demonstration purposes. I’m going to prepare the documents and if you can secure business interests, a financier, or a group of financiers, to take it up I am going to pay you fifteen percent on the contract. The flat purchase price is two million dollars and an arrange-

## A STUDY IN RUBBER

ment for royalties continuing for the next ten years. You will see therefore that with a little good luck you ought soon to be in possession of a moderate fortune."

"I am going to accept your proposition," said Roger, "and I am not going to say one single word of gratitude to you. It's quite out of the question."

"None of this serious stuff," exclaimed Dixon. He slapped Roger on the shoulder. "It is just a business deal. I'm going to use you and I've got to pay you for it."

"I know all about that," said Roger.

Dixon waved his hand airily. "Forget it," he said. "Now there are one or two particular points and they are very important. Maybe I'm rushing things a bit by sending you at this stage. Your line of procedure is to pick men you can absolutely trust, big men, give them every facility for examination and experiment, offer them the property on the terms set out on paper on the understanding that they will certainly require, namely that they come over here and see the manufacture, and satisfy themselves that the project is commercially sound. We won't tell them the actual chemical composition till we get them here, and are satisfied about them."

"Won't they guess it from what I shall have to say?"

"There is an outside chance, we'll take it."

Roger rose to go. "What's the next step, Dixon?"

"Come to see me tomorrow and I'll have the papers arranged. Before the day is out I'll take you to the factory in Jersey and show you the new material in tires. In thinking over the matter you will

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

probably get some ideas of your own in regard to the procedure in Europe; tell me about them tomorrow."

The two men shook hands.

"There is one other thing," said Dixon. "I'm drawing you a check for five thousand dollars which will be charged to expense account. You will need some money to carry on."

As Roger returned to his hotel his mind was surging. He had a new vista opened up to him. The big effort of his life was in front and with glowing heart he knew that Dixon would be justified in his trust.

When Roger reached the hotel still in a scintillation of mind he had a sudden little chill at the sight of a letter awaiting him. It bore the Cincinnati postmark. This is how it read.

"My dear Roger:—

You will be glad to hear that we are coming almost immediately to New York. We shall be there two days after you receive this letter. Please get in touch with us. We shall be staying at the Hotel Battersea.

Yours ever,  
Blanche."

That Marie Philipson and Blanche Arthur should follow hot on his heels was an annoyance which for the moment shook even Arthur Dixon from Roger's mind; that they should both be staying at the same hotel was a minor tragedy which might bring catastrophe of one sort or another within measurable distance.

Roger went out for a walk in the Park to do some intensive thinking by himself.

## CHAPTER VI

### OH THOSE WOMEN!

**R** OGER for the first time in his life had a sense of opportunity; his feet were light on the pavement, and he experienced a masterfulness which made the future a pliant instrument in his hands. Not for nothing had he rolled through the world during the last ten years. He faced the chances, he knew there was hard and delicate work in front, but all the time there rang within him the song of success.

A dissonant, irritating note came in the thought of the two girls from Cincinnati. That both families should have chosen the Hotel Battersea on Fifth Avenue was but one of those coincidences which seem improbable but which happen quite regularly when people are in difficulties. He hardened his heart, and he thought of Dixon, but even as he did so he saw the trouble which might come up like a cloud out of the western sky. If he read those girls rightly either one of them was capable of making a sensation, and he dared not face the thought of what they might do together. Roger had an understanding of American newspapers, and, in the tremulous privacy of his heart, acknowledged that each one of the girls had a good case. He called himself a dozen different kinds of names and having done that, he resolutely decided to seem a more hard-hearted scoundrel than he had been in the past. He had to escape. He could not allow

## THE ESCAPE OF ROGER DREW

this episode to come between him and Arthur Dixon, and all that Arthur Dixon meant.

And so it came about that Roger at the end of the next day, when he had been over the factory, and seen the new invention, and discussed plans and details with his friend, put the proposal that he should leave for Liverpool that same week. His excuse was that the sooner he got to business the less chance for interlopers. The following morning Providence was at work to help Roger. He had a telephone call at breakfast time from Dixon urging him to come to the office at all speed, and on going downtown he found Dixon with a clipping from the "New York Star" in his hand.

"Have you been talking about this thing, Drew?"

"Not a word."

Dixon handed over the cutting and Roger read this paragraph:

### BIG AUTOMOBILE INVENTION SIDE-SLIP AND ITS DANGERS ELIMINATED SCIENTIFIC TREATMENT OF RUBBER MAKES NEW ERA FOR MOTORS

"Lengthy and exhaustive experiments in the treatment of rubber by one of the leading automobile corporations have led to a discovery which in its various adaptations will probably solve the problem of applying the brakes at dangerous moments to automobiles. The details at present are secret, but it is known that the new rubber will prove to be in commerce as important an innovation as was vulcanized rubber when it was first introduced. The present discovery has its basis in a chemical which produces a gripping surface instead of a slipping surface on the application of water. The vast potentialities of the discovery

## OH THOSE WOMEN!

are apparent, and steps are being taken to place it on the American market at an early date. Meanwhile Mr. Roger Drew, a leading business man, has been commissioned to sail for England in connection with the rights across the Atlantic. Though but incidental to the automobile, and likely to prove of value in a variety of directions, the new rubber is the greatest individual contribution to the automobile industry since the internal combustion engine was placed in commission."

"A fine kettle of fish," said Dixon. "I've telephoned the paper but can get no information as to where the paragraph came from."

"I haven't dropped a syllable or a hint," said Roger.

"It has been known that we were experimenting but I thought our actual discovery had been concealed. There must be spies about the place. Probably some employee at the factory heard me talking to you the other day. I'm going to put the whole establishment through a sieve. But that doesn't help us much now the murder is out."

"Is it really so damaging?"

"Not necessarily, but it may be. I'm taking action. It is certainly annoying, and it cramps you. We have been pestered with applications for various concessions in the foreign rights by people who are taking a chance that we may be on the right track. There will be half a dozen individuals trying you before you get to the other side."

"The sooner I go the better," said Roger.

"Do you mind changing your name for a week?" said Dixon quickly.

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

“Not in the least, but what’s the idea?”

“Have you booked your passage?”

“Yes, I saw the steamship people yesterday afternoon and arranged for the ‘Latian’ at the end of the week.”

“I know the manager of the downtown office,” said Dixon.

He reached for the telephone, and Roger nodded. “George Grey is a good name,” he said.

And thus it was “George Grey” and not Roger Drew who appeared among the list of first class passengers in the “Latian.”

When Roger went aboard the ship at the end of the week, Blanche Arthur and Marie Philipson had been in New York for two days, and he had avoided any touch with them by changing his hotel, and by persistently keeping away from the club, where, he knew only too well, reproachful notes were lying in wait for him. Though Roger told himself that Marie Philipson and Blanche Arthur being young and impressionable, would soon recover, he had some disturbing moments. He had been on terms of tenderness with these girls, and he called to memory a dozen tokens of sweet kindness and consideration from each. And now that he was going away he was surprised at little warm feelings springing up within him, and an unpleasant prick in the thought that he would not again experience the shine in the eyes of Marie at one of his characteristic jokes, or hear the soft affectionate laugh of Blanche as she put his hat on straight. He could picture their emotions when they learned they were deserted. There

## OH THOSE WOMEN!

were moments when Roger was irascible towards a world out of joint.

He was glad of the bustle of departure, and the energetic genial Dixon left few opportunities for sentimental repining. Dixon was full of plans for his friend's return in a few months with big business in his pocket, and Roger was lifted by the thought — although as the steamer left the pier and he waved an answer to Dixon's goodbye there clung to him with shame-faced persistency the thought of the two girls at the Hotel Battersea.

As the ship drew out into the Hudson it was with a touch of relief that Roger went below to make the routine preparations for the voyage. In times of perplexity a fresh environment is often enough a clarifying influence, and Roger felt a pleasant relaxation in being compelled to push away his recent worries, and to turn to the every day trifles of shipboard. He knew the sea air was going to do him good. In a day or two he would be seeing both his past and his future in a clearer light, and measuring them in just, satisfying proportion.

He had a pleasant sense of homecoming as he made friends with the purser on the companionway, following an introduction from the steamship company's representative and Dixon.

"Anybody interesting on board, Mr. Jones?" said Roger, after his friend had gone.

"No-one outstanding. There's Ritson, President of the New York and Chicago Banking Corporation; the Countess of Dorchester with her two children;

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

Lyndon the novelist. Those are the only ones I remember."

"Mere dross," said Roger, resignedly. "Please let me come and sit at your table."

"Come down and we will fix your seat at once."

They found the second steward in the dining saloon surrounded by passengers, proceeding with his everlasting job of making up the human patchwork for meals.

"Don't know most of these," said the purser scanning the names at his table, "but here's a fellow I've met, here in this seat on my left — Fred Bullion — he's an American but lives in London, interesting fellow."

"Bullion?" said Roger. "I wonder if he's the man I knew at Cambridge. He got on in the world, he's a kind of glorified secretary to Sir John Magnet the financier."

"That's the man," said the purser. "He's been over twice before on this ship. He's a good sort. You'll like him."

At dinner that night Roger met Fred Bullion, recognizing at once the thick-set figure, a little thicker than of old, and the straight-looking enquiring eyes which were even more questioning than they used to be. A kindly determined soul, was Fred Bullion thinking along direct lines, and acting along direct lines, and generally reaching his goal. He had in him none of the whimsicality of Roger Drew. At the University as in his subsequent life, he had been a worker and not a dare-devil; not a man who sought to taste experience, certainly not an adventurer. He was on the way to being successful, and Roger was pretty much of a

## OH THOSE WOMEN!

failure, and yet Bullion in those far off days at Trinity had possessed a kind of admiration for the harum-scarum Roger Drew, his senior by a year, leader in mischief and popular reprobate.

“Why, it’s Drew!” he exclaimed as the latter took his seat and nodded a smiling salutation.

The two men shook hands. “Over ten years since we met,” said Bullion.

“A funny old world.”

They plunged into reminiscent talk about their acquaintances, many of whom had been extinguished in the war. Roger told Bullion that his changed name was for the voyage only, and was to prevent inquiries from trade rivals in connection with a business mission with which he was entrusted. “I shan’t betray you,” said Bullion. “You were always up to something queer.”

They exchanged their experiences. During the war Bullion had been taken out of the fighting line and put on the staff.

“That comes of having brains,” said Roger.

“I’d prefer your fighting record.”

“A serious young person.”

A flicker passed across Bullion’s face.

“Now don’t feel hurt,” said Roger. “There are half a million dead men and half a million live men who deserve the D. S. O. more than I do, and my dear Bullion I was never afflicted with modesty. All I meant was that the chances in the war were a matter of accident.”

Bullion shook his head.

“And the world is perfectly right now that it is

## THE ESCAPE OF ROGER DREW

all over and done with to forget its temporary emotions," went on Roger. "There are a few people like yourself who stick to past impressions but the public in general on both sides of the Atlantic, and in every country, are quite content to let the gallant Lieutenant-Colonel from the ranks revert to his job of selling vegetables from a barrow, and to watch with a touch of painful resignation the poor fellow getting what he can in a pawn-shop for his V. C., his Croix de Guerre, or his Congressional medal. Why not? Why make a tragedy of it? It's all in the game. A man is like the sea; he changes every day, certainly every week, and the public at large are just the individual grown big."

"The same Roger Drew. The same old stuff."

"I wish I could be as serious as you, Bullion. You are the man who gets there. No unexpected angles for you."

"In other words," said Bullion, "the diligent plodder, the good little boy."

In the days that ensued, Roger Drew and Fred Bullion were drawn together more and more, for there is nothing like a steamer voyage to force two individuals with a good many things in common to a proper understanding of each other.

Roger learned how Sir John Magnet, a millionaire had given Bullion a chance in his office before the war, and he came to see how the young man's quick grasp, power of initiative and balance had been noted and realized by Magnet. While nominally Magnet's secretary, Bullion was a director in two of his companies and more or less his confidant. It was an achievement for so young a man.

## OH THOSE WOMEN!

“You were born in America?” said Roger to him one evening in the smoking room as they sat sipping their coffee.

“Yes, and I am still an American.”

“That’s queer. You went to Cambridge, and you are spending your life in England.”

“My people sent me to school on the other side, and I went up to Cambridge and did pretty well there as you know, and then came business and the war, and I suppose I’m about as English as they make them now.”

“And still an American citizen.”

“My associations and my friends are all in England, and yet I have never been able to get away from old Ohio where I was born and spent my early boyhood. It’s curious. I just don’t want to change my citizenship. Perhaps one of these days I shall.”

Roger surveyed him through a cloud of cigarette smoke.

“You fill me with admiration,” he said.

The two men discussed the traits of Britain and America with an originality and a frankness which would have surprised and shocked some of their compatriots on both sides. It would sometimes have been hard to tell which was the Englishman and which was the American. They had many contacts. On women, as is the way of bachelors they were light and dogmatic.

“English women,” said Bullion, “are always good wives and occasionally good companions, whereas American women are sometimes good wives but always excellent companions.”

“I have no vast acquaintance with wives,” said

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

Roger, "but as a philosopher I have noted some characteristics in the single women."

"You bet you have!" said Bullion.

"They fall in love quicker than the English," said Roger.

"And fall out quicker," said Bullion. "Though I don't suppose," bowing to his companion, "you've had much of that experience."

"Steward, another whiskey and soda for Mr. Bullion."

"Simply compelled," said Bullion, deprecatingly.

"They have great courage in their emotions, the American women. They don't hesitate, they don't palter. You know where you are with them."

"But is that altogether an attraction?" said Bullion. "The pleasant doubt and probing, the gentle anxious investigation, and then the final summit of achievement. And besides, I am not sure that the American woman is so easily read."

"Why should she trouble to conceal her feelings, her opinions in the country which is women ridden?"

"Women ridden?" said Bullion.

"Look at prohibition. If you have ever descended to any dalliance, my boy, you will know their petulance, their atmosphere of indulgence, a direct inheritance of pioneer times in a pioneer country."

"How does that go with your idea of their being better companions than English women?"

"They have sparkle where English women have sympathy, they talk where English women are silent, they lift dull men to life."

"Oh, dull men!"

## OH THOSE WOMEN!

“And have you never realized how dull we men are, Bullion?”

“I have been bored to death by many women,” said the other.

“Hopeless. I don’t believe you would be fascinated by a Cleopatra.”

“Never met the type, but I’m still young.”

“It’s obvious you didn’t become engaged on this trip of yours to America, Bullion.”

“Other things to think of. I’ve been out to Ohio to see my mother who is coming over to me in England in six months’ time. She travelled up from Ohio with me to see me off.”

“Ohio?” said Roger.

“Yes, I was reared out near Cincinnati.”

Roger fell silent. The reminder was not a soothing one.

“Talking of American girls,” said Bullion, “I heard an amusing incident from my mother at breakfast time on the morning we sailed. She was at the Battersea in Fifth Avenue. My mother, on the day before had done some courtesy for an elderly lady stopping there with her daughter, and the daughter was a chatty, little kind of creature, and at tea in the afternoon she was talking about men just like you have been talking about women.”

“Oh, was she?” said Roger.

“You said just now that American girls had the advantage of directness in their associations with men, that they were not in the habit of fooling.”

“There are exceptions,” said Roger.

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

“I wouldn’t lay down any general rules if I were you. We are all children in these affairs.”

“Get on with the story,” said Roger. “What about this girl. What was her trouble?”

“Nothing serious, just a comic little situation, that’s all. She and her mother went to the Battersea, and in a few hours linked up with another family from Cincinnati who had just arrived there, not close friends but people to whom they had been introduced sometime ago. There was a girl in the second party, and the two girls got together and what do you think they found out? They discovered they had both been flirting with the same man in Cincinnati, who was in love with both of them, and who would have married either of them at the drop of a handkerchief. Family circumstances had brought them to New York, and they had to make the best of it. Each of these girls had been worried to death, until they had the opportunity of talking to each other, because this man would inevitably think that he had a right to press each of them to marry. Each had spent an anxious hour or two hunting plans to avoid seeing him alone. Funny wasn’t it? They had just been amusing themselves with him in a flirtatious affectionate kind of way. Of course he was an egotistical fool to have been taken in by them.”

“You meet fools like that all over the place,” said Roger. “What do you say to another whiskey and soda.”

## CHAPTER VII

### JOURNEYING

**A**S ROGER had foreseen, the voyage steadied his outlook, and, as perspective adjusted itself, his enthusiasm for the future developed. He saw more clearly with each succeeding day the opportunities which the business for Arthur Dixon would place in his hands.

A strong purpose puts wine into life, and Roger found himself mildly surprised that he should not have struggled sooner towards big and direct action. He was nearer happiness than he had ever been. His nerves sang; he was conscious of the power within him; satisfaction wrapped him like a mantle. He did himself something less than justice by contempt for his past aimlessness, the desultory months and years; and as for the Cincinnati girls (and all the other girls) they sank to trivialities soon to obliterate themselves from memory. At last he had a chance for solid achievement, and he hungered for the streets and offices of London, his field of effort. And he was in this mood when grinning Fate, whose favors had been so long withheld, gave him a glimpse of still another world of stimulating and novel interest.

In his new experience Roger felt like a man who on the tideless sea of life suddenly finds himself swept along by a strong current, rejoicing in the fresh and vital impulse, and while exhilarated in his good

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

fortune, perceives, to his amazement, that he is being impelled towards a freshening breeze which might in itself have carried him to port.

Roger had lounged through the human species carelessly, but at long intervals he had been roused by a flash of character good or bad, and it was this perception for personality which was the open door for his fresh discovery. And, as is the way with so many of the accidents which mark a real happening in the lives of men and women, Roger found his new interest by a combination of common-places quite insignificant in themselves, —a burst of fine weather, a chance remark of Bullion's, one of the odd hobbies in his own possession.

The "Latian" was within two days of Queenstown before the weather cleared up sufficiently to permit the inevitable concert on the ship, which had been talked of but unformulated because half the passengers were keeping their cabins in the unusually rough voyage. The sudden sunshine loosed a lot of energy, and young men with sheets of note paper and pencils canvassed the deck chairs on the lee side, invaded card games in the smoking-room, and disturbed middle-aged ladies who were busily writing long-delayed letters in the lounge. Presently Bullion and Roger at shuffle-board on the upper deck were encompassed.

"My parlor trick," said Bullion, "consists of two songs which my friends and relatives are thoroughly sick of hearing. I am anxious for new audiences. I will contribute them with pleasure."

Roger protested his inability. He had a voice like a bull frog, he said, and the notes on a piece of music

## JOURNEYING

were as incomprehensible to him as the dots in a decimal sum.

“You can recite or tell stories or something.”

“Alas no,” said Roger,

“I can not sing  
To dance I am ashamed  
In all the lighter things of life  
I’m halt and dumb and maimed.”

“What about this ventriloquism?” said Bullion. “Mr. Grey is an amateur ventriloquist,” he explained to the surrounding group.

There was general shout at the discovery of a treasure of so unusual a nature.

“All right put me down for ten minutes,” he said resignedly. And a little later he went with Bullion to the latter’s cabin, as he explained it, to arrange his “stunts.” He aroused a boyish interest in his companion by speaking with his lips motionless and practically closed.

“You’re good,” said Bullion admiringly. “You’ll be the hit of the evening. How do you manage it?”

“The old trick. Expectation of the audience.”

“But how do you throw your voice?”

“There is no such thing as throwing the voice. Just speak with your lips still, and then by your eyes or some gesture indicate where the sound apparently comes from. On top of that deepen your voice or heighten it to take on various tones. Mimicry, that’s all.”

“You’ve had some side lines in your time.”

## THE ESCAPE OF ROGER DREW

“Life is one vast education,” said Roger.

The concert that evening was the usual mediocre success, and Roger's part of it was certainly the star performance. He had secured a doll from the barber's shop on board, and put it through many vocal exercises. Roger was vigorously applauded, and had to go on beyond his allowed time. Afterwards he was the centre of a group of men in the smoking-room who wanted him to repeat some of his experiments. He shook his head and demanded a game of bridge, which, after many protestations, was accorded to him.

At one of the side tables in the dining saloon there had been an appreciative auditor unnoted by Roger. Joan Defensor, a careful nurse of her seasick mother, had seen little of the passengers in the course of the voyage and if her eyes had lighted on Roger at any time during the week he was no more than one of the crowd. She had not even known his name. When he stood up in the evening before the people assembled in the dining saloon, and began his gravely humorous patter and presently went on with his imitations, she was pleasantly arrested. She joined in the laughter and the applause. It was a pleasing sense of recognition — though she had never seen the man — which gave her first a feeling of understanding. There was nothing specially handsome about this Mr. George Grey — she was past school-girlish preferences — but there was an appeal in the slim figure, the dark irregular hair, the big humorous mouth, and the melancholy violet eyes. He was a curiosity, but a rather mysterious one; there was much in him concealed — she felt this at the same time that she had the sensation of

## JOURNEYING

something like kinship. His voice when he spoke, deep and vibrant, struck chords in her. Subsequently in talking to her mother she described him as quaint and aloof, although he was the funny man of the evening.

"I have heard of this personal magnetism," she laughed, "and I really think he exerted it over me."

"You haven't met him before?" said Mrs. Defensor.

"No," said Joan. "Shall probably never see him again except on the ship before we reach Liverpool. I dare say at close quarters he is uninteresting. So it's good we're near the end of the voyage. No illusion to be shattered."

Joan was quite sincere in these words to her mother, and yet it would be a charitable judge who said there was no streak of curiosity in the motive which took Joan out next morning on deck for an unaccustomed walk, although the sight of southern Ireland gave her an excuse for leaning over the rail with the other sightseers. She was mildly moved to see what the man looked like in the open air. And, being a young woman of direct impulses and without the taint of sentimentalism, she went up to look at him as she might have gone up to look at an author, or a painter, or an actor, who had temporarily seized her attention. Joan was not to know the forces that were at work.

Bullion and Roger Drew were standing near the smoking-room door chatting together as they watched the swerving gulls and the Tuskar Lighthouse in the distance.

"Who is that tall girl along there?" said Roger. Bullion turned lazily and he paused a second before

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

he answered. "It's a Miss Joan Defensor," he said, "her mother's been sick during the trip, that's why we haven't seen much of her. I know them slightly."

"Defensor?" said Roger. His tone was non-committal and so was his face. Then he added, "She's striking."

"Yes," said Bullion. If Roger had not been occupied by some far-away thought, he would have noticed that his companion was taciturn.

"Let's take a turn round the deck," said Roger.

As they sauntered along Roger said, "You'll be careful not to drop a word as to my real name, Bullion. I don't want any of the people on board at all to get a hint."

"Why certainly," said Bullion in surprise, "what a queer old fish you are!"

Alas, for the puny precautions of the disturbed masculine mind Joan Defensor, seeing the two men disappear, turned and walked towards the entrance of the companionway. And Roger and Bullion completing the circle of the deck came face to face with her. She smiled recognition to Bullion, and Roger had no time to draw back.

"Isn't this ripping?" said Bullion, "the gulls, and sunshine, and the old land?"

"And you an American!" said Joan.

Bullion laughed a little nervously. "Let me introduce my friend Mr. Grey." Roger and the girl bowed to each other.

"I know Mr. Grey a little after hearing him last night," said Joan.

## JOURNEYING

Roger lifted his eyebrows. "It has been always my lot to give that kind of first impression."

"It interested me very much. I wish my mother could have been there."

"You'll puff him up with conceit," said Bullion. "He's too inflated already."

"Friends of long standing," said Joan.

"On the contrary I have known him long enough to mistrust him, and what's worse I've got to leave him here for a few minutes to blow his own trumpet. I have to get off a wireless message. I'll be back before long."

As Bullion went off towards the purser's office Roger wondered at his withdrawal, had a suspicion of restraint, a glimmering that the young American was not entirely himself in spite of his bantering words. It was but a surprised idea, quickly vanishing under the continuing conversation of the girl beside him. He was puzzling himself as to whether he liked her, and it was because he realized he could not understand her power. He had met pretty girls, beautiful girls before, but their non-understanding, or their virtual subserviency, had quickly destroyed any deep or strong interest. He had an uncanny feeling that Joan Defensor was his superior.

"You might have been a professional, you did it so well."

"A real compliment," said Roger. "You saw last night my one accomplishment. I just love to show off with it. Now and again it comes in useful. When I was at school for instance I did it at a soldiers' charity concert once, and made a distinguished general laugh."

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

“You were in the war?”

“With several million others. I did not do any ventriloquism there.”

For the first time Joan had not a ready response, and after a hesitation she said, “I suppose you had exciting times. Did you see much fighting? Were you hurt at all? Yes, I know you were wounded.”

“You noticed that little limp of mine,” said Roger. “It’s the reminder I’ve got left. I’m lucky compared with a good many. But these are old topics now.” He half rose from his chair. “That man Bullion has not come back. I suppose I had better go and find him.”

“What part of France were you in?” said Joan passing over his remark.

“The Ypres salient and on the Somme, pretty big sections where so much of the British work was done.”

“I had a brother out there,” said Joan suddenly.

Roger cursed himself for not having left her before. This was just the kind of situation likely to arise with such a girl. He was compelled to say something however obvious, and though Roger had lied often and thoroughly he was angry at the deception which now lay in front of him.

“There were one or two Defensors at the front. No connection I believe. I met a Lieutenant Richard Defensor.”

Joan with eyes alight turned on him.

“That was my brother.”

“Saw him two or three times. I was sent along the line on a special job and came in touch with his lot. Did he get through?”

“He was killed,” said Joan.

## JOURNEYING

Roger kept silent for a second or two, and then he said, "I'm sorry."

"Mr. Grey my mother would have liked to meet you. Any officer who knew Dick is such a comfort."

"I'm afraid I couldn't say much. It was just a casual meeting. One came across so many fellows. I do remember he was young and keen looking. He seemed most likeable."

"Did you meet a Captain Drew?"

"A wild kind of chap. Yes I remember him."

"He was very brave."

"They were all brave."

"We are specially interested in him because of my brother."

"You had no other brothers?"

"No, he was all we possessed."

There was no escape now and Roger knew it. He sat in silence listening to a simple little tale, none the less painful that its like has been heard in ten thousand homes. Nor did the relation of it seem at all out of place to Roger. Later when he looked back he thought it rather strange that a girl of her type should have gone on to tell him the story but as he sat there by her side it seemed quite natural, indeed unavoidable.

"My brother Richard," said Joan, "was seventeen when the war broke out and he was at a public school. He falsified his age and enlisted, and nearly broke my mother's heart. My mother was not unpatriotic or anything of that kind, but it was too terrible that her only boy should go to the war. Everybody loved Richard. He was so bright and sparkling, and a very affectionate son. He got through all right at first and

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

was rapidly promoted. Then for eighteen months we lived in alternate spasms of dread and relief. It seemed to us that he was unfortunate in being in so much of the fighting, and then you know what that meant to a mother and a sister."

Roger's eyes contracted a little.

"Go on," he said, "tell me some more."

"He was in the Ypres salient and one night he and a brother officer this Captain Drew and three men were cut off by the enemy. The three men were killed, my brother was seriously wounded and Captain Drew took him in his arms and carried him back under fire trying to protect my brother's body from further injuries. He himself was knocked over by a piece of shell just before they reached the British lines. They were near enough to be brought in without further hurt. It was not any good my brother was dead."

The girl's eyes were set as she stared out across the sea. Roger said nothing.

"His death put the light out of my mother's life. She has had only one object after the first great shock was over and that was to find this brother officer of his."

"Curious I should have known him," said Roger. "He disappeared, did he?"

"Yes. After the war was over we tried hard to get in touch with him, and have never ceased to try since. We know a good deal about him because my brother used to write and tell us of his friendship. He was a light hearted man, but always most kind to my brother and very fond of him. Richard used to describe him."

## JOURNEYING

“What do you know about this Captain Drew?”

“He had a queer sense of humor. He sometimes drank too much. He was quite careless of himself, and yet my brother said that the men of his regiment liked him better than any other officer they had. And I don't care how bad he was we just want to find him. That has been our only real interest since the war was over. It ought to have been easy, of course, but when he left the army we found out from his friends that he went abroad, and he seems to have led a life of adventure. He just avoided everybody. Even his people don't know where he is.”

Roger's voice was a little hard when he said, “I can understand the feelings of your mother and yourself, Miss Defensor, and I am sure that he would like to know of your gratitude, but I fancy he was a rather wild, flighty kind of a man, and perhaps the memory of him absent is better for you both than the reality.”

Joan Defensor looked at him. “You can't know what we feel, Mr. Grey” she said. “You don't know what my brother meant to us. You never read his letters about this man.”

When the girl had gone below Roger leaned over the rail looking out across the water with unseeing eyes. Before him was a morass of uneven ground, a little hillcock, scattered posts, and remnants of wire, and pools of muddy water faintly to be realized in the darkness of the night. There was the rattle of machine gun fire, coming from either friends or enemies. The horizon on the left was stabbed with flashes of light. He saw a huddled form at his feet, and he remembered the dull weakness of himself as he lifted the boy and

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

started forward in the final effort. He remembered, too, how he sank into the mud, how the noise grew louder, and how inert and limp was the burden he strove to carry to safety. "Dick had hard luck," he said to himself.

As Roger stared across the water at the Irish coast the picture moulded itself afresh and he saw something of his dead friend in Joan Defensor. The changing light of the eyes, the quick resolute look about the lips, the swing of rather square shoulders. Yet these reminders of Dick Defensor were but details in a new discovery. He had often wondered if there was a man or woman who could touch him to real companionship. Something in Joan Defensor raised his spirit. She soothed him. She might almost be one to whom he could yield himself in frankness. He had pleasant sensations at the sound of her voice, and knew that in her presence he rose to a plane of thought and emotion hitherto beyond him. With a slow hard effort he stiffened himself. More than ever was there the necessity that he should not be known, that the identity of Roger Drew should be hidden. At least he would conserve a fragment of his self-respect.

Roger went down to find Bullion.

"What did you cut away for?" he said. "She must have thought it odd."

Bullion laid his hand on his friend's shoulder. "I've known the Defensors off and on for some little while," he said. "Will you forgive me if I say that I couldn't bear to see her so interested in you this morning, Roger. I haven't said a word, but I'm in danger of making a fool of myself about that girl."

## JOURNEYING

Roger laughed with unusual and almost boisterous heartiness.

“My dear fellow,” he said, “I congratulate you. She is a lovely girl. Don’t be so nervous. Go right in and win.”

## CHAPTER VIII

### BUSINESS FIRST

**T**HAT Roger came to tell Bullion the cause of his journey to England was the result of neither accident nor impulse; the confidence was given deliberately by Roger as part of his campaign, and indeed he bluntly said that no friendship in itself would have led to the revelation. He saw a chance. Bullion's association with Sir John Magnet was a fact which had become increasingly important to Roger as the voyage had progressed.

It was on the day before the meeting with Joan Defensor that Roger had said, "Tell me more about Magnet."

"He's a big man, with defects which are magnified by his enemies, and with qualities which are sometimes sneered at."

"How is great success brought about? Is there some hidden secret? Some of us unsuccessful ones dwell on the qualification of luck. Others have a religious regard for what they call the master mind."

"Life, is like a bridge game," said Bullion. "If you are clever and possess the right temperament you have one of the factors, but that does not mean that you are necessarily going to succeed. Remarkable cards provide the other element. You have to combine rare ability and rare luck in order to do the big thing."

"What is he like?"

## BUSINESS FIRST

“Magnet is a middle-aged, tall, thin, placid-looking fellow with volcanoes inside him. He started with nothing except imagination and will power, struck it lucky in his twentieth year, and has never looked back. He had a controlling interest in a cotton mill when he was twenty-eight, was chairman of a series of popular London restaurants at thirty. In the next ten years, although never very much in the public eye, he had become a big figure in the financial world. He is now one of the ten men who control the cotton industry of Britain. He has interests in docks and ship building companies which made him a separate fortune in the war. He has holdings in three or four other directions, and I don't know any of them that's not making money, except those in connection with ship building and his newspaper. Have you heard that he has recently become the principal proprietor of the London 'Daily Spur?' ”

“Magnet to me is just a name. No one knows much about him except that he is very rich. I would like to ascertain one thing. Is he interested at all in automobiles?”

“He holds a block of shares in the Sparks Splurge concern which as you know makes the most expensive cars in the world. Is your business something to do with cars?”

Roger nodded.

“I want to ask your opinion. Do you think Magnet would be interested in an invention which has been discovered by one of the leading motor concerns of the United States, and will presently be used by machines everywhere?”

“Of course he would. But Roger, inventions don't

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

always turn out that way, although they look like it at first."

"I'm not at all concerned. What I would like to be satisfied about is first whether Magnet would and could handle the proposition and secondly, much more important to me, whether he is a straight man to deal with, one whose word may be relied on, and who is incapable of what I may call the big trickery of business."

"I wouldn't like to guarantee the moral worth of any millionaire living," said Bullion. "There is intrigue and scheming without end in detail, and often enough it's a case of wit against wit. You have to face the facts, Roger. At the same time Magnet is certainly as good as any one else on either side of the Atlantic. And I have never known him guilty of mean shadiness such as you indicate. He is unpleasant at times, a regular bully, intolerant and can often be as brutal as the devil. But I have known him to be very generous indeed. Make up your mind that in all bigger operations you've got to take a chance."

"I hear a lot about the American business man as compared with the English business man. Is there a separate cult?"

"The Americans are bolder, the English more cautiously calculating. The Americans can afford to take chances; the English can not always afford to do so."

"As to honesty?"

"My experience is the bigger the man the better he is."

"I can see you are not a socialist."

## BUSINESS FIRST

“Honesty pays in the bigger fields, not always in the smaller ones. There is a greater tradition of fair dealing in the English commercial world, and it is of enormous importance, produces an atmosphere. At the same time a good American is the same as a good Englishman.”

“Americans don’t fight for farthings as we do.”

“They don’t have to. It is not generosity, it’s just business.”

“I know a big strong American who trusts me and I trust him.”

“Magnet’s not a bad specimen, this side.”

“How is it you get on so well with him.”

“I like the English life. I make my home in England, but I have some American characteristics, some initiative, a capacity for continuing and high pressure work, unconventionality, and a freedom from inherited routine.”

“Yes, but that doesn’t cover all the features,” said Roger ruminatively. “There’s a good deal more in you than that.”

He balanced his words as he spoke, and he looked at Bullion steadily.

“I’m wondering if Magnet is the one man to be trusted whom I am in search of. I think I’m going to risk it.”

When Bullion had heard the story he said, “You’re not giving away anything and you can’t, because you haven’t got it in your head to give, and before the bargain is completed Magnet has got to go to America and see the whole thing for himself. You may depend upon it that your friend Dixon over there will be quite

## THE ESCAPE OF ROGER DREW

capable of taking care of himself and of his property when the time comes. If your discovery will do what you claim for it you are on the track of a fortune for yourself, and it undoubtedly means tremendous things for those who take it up. But I should have to be convinced, and I am sure Magnet will say the same thing, that these new tires will act in the way you have described, and that there are no loopholes, such for instance, as the exhaustion of their peculiar quality after a short while. There are many other possibilities which would have to be guarded against. You are not an expert you know, Roger.”

“I have faith that Dixon and his associates have given the invention every kind of test to meet objections that might be put up against it.”

“In that case, we will get to work without losing an hour,” said Bullion. “Consider yourself to have an appointment with Magnet on the day after our arrival. I am going to send a wireless to him. I shall summarize all you have told me. If it is worth handling it’s big enough to do very thoroughly and very promptly.”

## CHAPTER IX

### SIR JOHN MAGNET

**A**T ELEVEN o'clock on the morning after he landed Roger went to see Sir John Magnet at office of the "Daily Spur," where the financier temporarily established himself in an effort to bring his new property to a paying basis. He had to reach Magnet through Bullion's room.

"You'll be present?" said Roger.

"Magnet does a new thing like this entirely himself, and it's possible I may know nothing at all about it until the whole matter is completed. Come right in to Sir John."

As Roger stepped through the doorway he had before him the picture of a tall clean-limbed man with gentle eyes. Here was no fierce eagle-like individual, with talons sharpened, and fierce mien, instead there was graciousness which in itself was a welcome. Sir John Magnet moved forward quickly, shook hands with Roger and said, "I'm glad to see you Mr. Drew. Years ago when I was a young man I had a slight acquaintance with your father in the City, and it is good to meet his son. Come and sit down over here at my desk."

Roger responded instantly to such sunshine, and he showed himself the cordial genial man of affairs, who might well have been a millionaire himself for the freedom and equality with which he talked to Magnet.

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

He found none of the reluctance within him which he had anticipated; it was as easy to give explanations to the financier as it had been to Bullion. Magnet asked many questions, probing questions — as to the kind of trials to which the new tires had been subjected, the road surfaces on which they had been tried, the cars to which they had been fitted, the personality of the directors in New York, the standing of the company there, and finally he studied with a good deal of attention the document giving the terms of the British rights.

“Of course I am not going to commit myself to accepting these figures, Mr. Drew,” he said, “you mustn’t expect that.”

“Those are the terms I am entrusted with,” said Roger.

“If I judge Mr. Dixon aright,” said Magnet, “it probably will not be difficult to come to an adjustment with him should occasion demand it. Whether the occasion will demand it or not remains to be seen. Bullion told you, did he not, that I was interested in automobiles? As a matter of fact it goes a little beyond that point, for I have been the user of machines from the first year of their introduction, and you must take it that I can talk intelligently to automobile engineers.”

“You are the very man we want,” said Roger quietly.

“I think I am, that is if your invention is as good as Mr. Dixon thinks it is. I want to tell you that we have had the thought of some device of this kind, and that our scientists have been working on it. I do not

## SIR JOHN MAGNET

know how far they have progressed, and it would be necessary for me to submit your discovery for examination to find out its value on the technical side. Will you have a sample of the rubber sent to me?"

"I have a complete tire packed up in the hall down stairs."

"Excellent. Tell them to send it up to me when you go out."

"By tomorrow I'll have a car fitted with the tires and you can experiment for yourself."

"Yes, I should like to do that as soon as possible."

"Should I bring the car round tomorrow?"

"No, send it. I don't quite know my arrangements, but at some period tomorrow I will drive it myself, and with the assistance of buckets of water — unless the weather comes to our assistance, — I will make preliminary tests."

Roger left Sir John Magnet aglow with the feeling that he had done the right thing. He sent a long cable to Dixon in New York telling him the position.

Roger had no immediate reply from Dixon, and there was no cause for one. It was clear the American, pleased as he could hardly fail to be at the message, must wait for developments. Meanwhile Roger lost no opportunity afforded him by the friendliness of Magnet, and he saw a good deal of the financier.

He drove with him to his country place in Kent, and met him again both at the newspaper office and in his City office — a big suite of rooms in New Broad Street. Magnet quickly acknowledged that the first test of the new tires was satisfactory, but explained that he and those associated with him could not afford

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

to take risks until every kind of doubt had been eliminated, and he must have a report from his technical experts before he went further into the business.

In the course of a week's acquaintanceship Roger saw several sides of a strong man; to Roger himself Magnet was by turns comradely, explanatory, and frequently charming. He had a lively tongue and many good stories. More than once he recalled his fleeting acquaintance with Roger's father. Incidentally he gave Roger a little well-meant advice about his own future. Roger came to the decision that Bullion, in order to prevent disappointment, had over stressed Magnet's less likeable characteristics — and this notwithstanding the fact that he once saw Magnet in a sudden gale of passion for no apparent reason with a departmental manager at the City office, heard him use rather a nasty sneer towards Russell, the editor of the "Daily Spur." After all Magnet did not set out to be a saint. And the strong impulses which had led him up to his achievements were not to be repressed in Sunday school fashion. Roger had plenty of excuses for him, and they were quite reasonable ones too.

He was mystified and a little shaken when, just a week after he arrived in England, he had a cable from Dixon with the two words, "Watch him." For the first time he had a shade of doubt as to Dixon's inevitable judgment. Dixon had apparently been misled by the rumors about Magnet, the suggestion as to unscrupulousness and hard dealing which were always around a successful millionaire, but even while Roger told himself this he had a touch of discomfort from the cable. It was unlike Dixon to express doubt or fear without

## SIR JOHN MAGNET

the soundest reason; he was never impulsive, and Roger had judged him to be a man who, in the presence of danger, would rather repress a word of alarm than utter it, Dixon was essentially a man of action. The only explanation was that he wished to impress caution in handling affairs with a man of Magnet's power and ruthlessness. At the same time Roger felt that the American owing to lack of opportunities had not properly pictured the financier. Alas, for the frailty of an adventurer's judgment in matters outside the human heart.

Twenty-four hours had helped to quiet still further the misgivings of Roger when the earthquake came. It was in the shape of a letter from Magnet. This was the communication which took the ground from under Roger's feet.

“Dear Mr. Drew:—

It is with regret I have to say I can not proceed further with the negotiations for your new automobile tire. As I explained our own experts were busy with experiments, and I have now received reports from Scotland stating that a few weeks ago they themselves hit upon the formula for a manufactured rubber of similar qualities. I do not know whether it is exactly the same invention, but as the results are identical you will understand that we hope to utilize our own product.

Yours very sincerely,  
John Magnet.”

Roger read the letter through twice before he fully comprehended its import and when he had done so,

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

his first impression was that Magnet desired to try a practical joke. The thing was too tragic to be true. He looked at the letter again, and found it was written on the specially headed note paper which Magnet used from the "Daily Spur" office. And then with a sense of deadening reality, he recognized the genuineness of the signature "John Magnet"; he had seen it several times in the past week.

Roger took a deep breath, and there came to him an impression of the past, of one night in a foray in "no man's land" when the noise of machine gun fire betokened an unexpected enemy move which meant encirclement, the dull realization that everything was at an end. He sensed again his helplessness in the bullet swept area, his mingled resentment and resignation at the fore-ordainment and the hard inevitability of it all. And then came the wound, and darkness —.

Roger's sensation for a little was that of numbness, a reaction to his personal loss, then the full reach of the injury grew on him as he saw that not only had he lost his one great chance in life but also had failed in the trust given him by his friend in New York — a man who had broken routine, and taken risks in his confidence in Roger's individuality, his caution, his energy, his grip.

He laid the letter on his dressing table lighted his pipe and walked up and down the room. The cruel cleverness of Magnet was what held his imagination. He began to see how the tragedy had shaped itself; Bullion's wireless message from the "Latian" had set the financier at work — exactly how, Roger did not trouble himself to guess. And when Magnet had se-

## SIR JOHN MAGNET

cured all he could from the unsuspecting representative of Dixon he had planned his plot, and everything being complete, had made his stroke. Roger began to understand why Sir John Magnet had attained great fortune and influence; and then in a curiously impersonal way he saw the unfairness of the man, not so much from his methods, as from his original decision to take advantage of the situation. To Roger the prospect had meant his one great opportunity in life, had meant a fortune; to Magnet the affair meant a small addition to wealth that was already vast. Success in his device would at best be a passing satisfaction, just a few hours of play in the great game. Within a month new plans would have made the present scheme merely the occasion for a smile, a recollection of how efficiency had once again been triumphant — and what was an incident to Magnet would remain ruin to Roger. Roger permitted himself for a minute an outside view of Magnet's cold-bloodedness, his capacity for detachment. Most individuals were handicapped by some streak of human sentiment; Magnet was specially gifted for he did not mind being cruel without reason. Roger with a hard grin admitted the financier's brilliance; it was admirable if looked at from the appropriate angle. His nice manners, his friendliness, came back to Roger, a true master in the great art of bluff!

Roger was at his most poignant moment with the thought of Dixon. He would look on Roger, if not as a faithless steward, at least as a pathetically incompetent one. Roger realized the finer sides of Dixon, and for the first time he was in a quiver of passion.

Within an hour he saw where his immediate duty

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

lay, and he went out and cabled Magnet's letter word by word to Dixon in New York. He slept little that night, and was down to breakfast early in the morning. At eight o'clock a cable from Dixon arrived, and this is what it contained: —

“He must have had news of your mission before you reached England because on the day you landed we found a new employee in the Jersey factory trying to get into the private office apparently with a view to finding out our plans. He was probably but one of several who were put on to the job in various directions. We have no evidence as to how the secret was obtained, but it is clear that it has been stolen from us in some kind of way. Don't let it worry you too much, for no fault attaches to yourself and I should have acted exactly as you have done. We are not going to sit down under it and the best lawyers and detectives on both sides are going to give him a fight. You are still in our employ. Hold yourself in readiness for any action that you may be directed to take.”

The morning had brought a measure of recovery to Roger, and the cable from Dixon helped him further. He prepared to go to the City, and as a preliminary he went up to his room and changed his clothes, dressed himself with more than usual care. He was of the type who like to be especially well groomed in times of emergency.

## CHAPTER X

### MORAL AND INTELLECTUAL DAMAGE

**D**IXON'S generous words from America eased Roger's spirit a little; there was yet some hope on the business side, and, with this assuaging knowledge, he felt swelling within him the personal resentment at Magnet. Roger had been conquered with some of his own weapons — an unforgivable sin to any sensitive man. Magnet's calculated suavity, his assumed comradeship of manner, his air of confidential trust — these things burned Roger like hot iron. He had been toyed with, and then with a light gesture, betrayed. How Magnet must have laughed at his simplicity, his boyish directness, his earnestness in seeking opportunity. Child's play for a man like Magnet!

Roger faced it all without wincing, but he was experiencing the steady accretion of hate, not the hate which could be satisfied with an outburst of violence, a torrent of words, a thrashing for the offender, but a hate which required for appeasement the well-planned application of injury most likely to be damaging to self esteem, to be destructive of vanity — and accompanied with blighting ridicule, and only incidentally financial loss. Roger had his enemy measured. He took count of himself, too, and he faced the future squarely. In this cold fervour which was holding him material success, business prowess, had sunk to a regardless thing.

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

He was destined to be poor, that was obvious, but he could starve along somehow, and he had now an object which transcended other ambitions. To get level with this man Magnet would be a possession for always. Roger felt a rising of spirit, for he was in effect a desperate man, and when desperate he had special qualifications.

It was thus that Roger, with a white rosebud in his buttonhole, presented himself in the entrance hall of the "Daily Spur," sent up his name to Bullion, and took a seat in the little glass-partitioned hall facing the lift. Illustrated papers lay on the table in front of him, and he pulled one of them towards him, and glanced at it with sprightly interest, although as a matter of fact he had the journal upside down. He heard the lift descending and pushed the journal away from him. And then he saw step out into the hall Mrs. Defensor and Joan. Instantly in a burst of assumed interest he had raised the opened magazine in front of him so that his face was concealed, and his relief was deep as their car rolled away from the front of the building. A minute later a uniformed messenger boy from upstairs came to him with the information that Bullion was at the City office of Magnet.

"He only comes here when Sir John is here," volunteered the boy.

"Is Sir John at the City office?"

"I don't know, sir. I expect he is."

Roger went up into Fleet Street, mounted an omnibus, and ten minutes later got off at the Bank, and walked along to New Broad Street. There was a car outside the entrance of Magnet's building and as Roger

## MORAL AND INTELLECTUAL DAMAGE

passed he recognized it as the one which had taken the two ladies from the "Daily Spur" office. He permitted himself a moment's speculation, and then went up in the lift to the third floor, the whole of which was occupied by Magnet's offices. Walking along the corridor, Roger passed doors on the glass panels of which were inscribed the names of various staple industries — cotton, iron, ships, were those he noticed, and then he came to a panel with Bullion's name on it. Roger opened it, and a minute later was shaking hands with his friend.

"Come along into the sanctum," said Bullion. "Sit down, and make yourself at home. Have a cigarette? Awful sorry to hear that Magnet failed you on the tire proposition."

Roger threw out his hands in a gesture of despair. "Luck!" he said. "I've got to go ahead with other people. I don't think Magnet treated me very well."

"Believe me, Roger, Magnet's experts in Scotland were experimenting on this line. That wasn't bogey. You may have hurried things up a bit. Remember I warned you about Magnet, and if I had known what I know now I don't think I would have sent him that wireless from the steamer."

"Forget it," said Roger. "I'm going to look to the future. I'm holding myself in reserve for anything Dixon wants, and meanwhile I'm going to push ahead and try to make myself acquainted with all kinds of business. I've missed out once; it isn't going to happen again."

"Perhaps this affair won't turn out so badly as it looks."

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

“I can’t trust Magnet any more.”

“He sticks to his story with me, Roger. Not a hint of any sharp practice and he made a kindly reference to yourself, and said he recognized it was hard luck.”

“He’s a pretty clever man,” said Roger thoughtfully.

“You have not to take his moods too seriously.”

“No, I should be more concerned about his actions.”

Bullion pointed to the door of an adjoining room from which the muffled sound of a rapidly rising voice could be heard.

“He’s on the rampage about something in there now. Hello, here he comes.”

The door opened, and Roger had a picture of Magnet with lowered eyebrows, and shoulders canted forward.

“Bullion —”

He stopped at the sight of Roger, gave him a corroding glance, and then said, “Well?”

Many of those in his employment knew that tone of voice and the savage mind behind it — a combination which scattered their wits and left them helpless. Roger would not have made a good servant of Sir John Magnet. He looked at the financier with serene geniality. “It is not very well,” he said with a kind of humorous resignation in his voice, “at least not for me.”

Bullion turned to him. “I think you had better go Drew.”

## MORAL AND INTELLECTUAL DAMAGE

“Go!” exclaimed Magnet. “What is he doing here?”

“What do you mean by your intrusion? You are here for no good purpose. You are spying out my business. You are taking advantage of my kindness to you last week.”

His voice shook with anger.

“I wrote and told you I had no use for you and your project. What do you mean by forcing your way in?”

He raised a minatory forefinger.

“Be careful of yourself. One false step and I’ll give you in charge of the police. You are here seeking to find out certain things that you have no right to know. Don’t try any of your confounded Yankee tricks on me.”

Bullion had a deep feeling of compassion for his unhappy friend, who had first suffered heavy loss, and then had to submit to a ferocious bullying. He hated to see him humiliated, and he gave what might be called a mental gasp as he noticed the demeanor of Roger. The latter was eyeing Magnet with little corrugations of the forehead which might have passed for a smile, but his eyes were quite expressionless, and he raised himself on his toes as though lost in reflection.

“Most interesting,” he said softly, and his eyes never left Magnet’s face. “It can not be habitual.”

Magnet stared at him as if he thought the young man were crazy.

“Steady yourself or you will step over the crack one of these days.”

“Insolent — ” began Magnet.

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

“On the contrary,” said Roger swiftly, “with a deep respect for you which I shall manifest as the opportunity serves.”

He turned to Bullion. “One word before I leave this home of harmony.”

Bullion looked at Magnet, but the latter had swung tempestuously toward his own room.

“Has he gone to telephone for a policeman?” said Roger hilariously.

“My dear chap,” said Bullion, “for Heaven’s sake be careful. You don’t want to make him your enemy.”

“A quite unnecessary process. It wasn’t that I wanted to speak to you about. The Defensors are here.”

“I’ve got them waiting in another room now. I was going in just as you came.”

“I don’t want them to know anything about me. I tried to help young Dick Defensor who was killed in an engagement at the front. They are anxious to show their gratitude to me. I don’t want it. I want it less than ever now. I don’t want them to know anything about me. Please let them be ignorant of the fact that I came over on the ‘Latian.’ Will you do that?”

“Of course I will,” said Bullion, who was prepared to promise anything to get his friend out of the office quickly.

“I wanted to talk to you, — ” began Roger.

“I can’t stop now, with the old man like he is. Dine with me tonight — Cafe Royal at seven thirty.”

“Good enough,” said Roger. “I’ll meet you there — if you should chance to survive the day,” He

## MORAL AND INTELLECTUAL DAMAGE

nodded towards Magnet's room as he picked up his hat.

A minute later Bullion was apologizing to Mrs. Defensor and her daughter for his delay.

"I suppose it's a liberty to come and bother you in business hours, Mr. Bullion," said Joan. "Please put the blame on mother."

"I'm more likely to thank her. It's good to see you both. You narrowly escaped a call yesterday."

"There mother. Your talk of Mr. Bullion yesterday afternoon was an inspiration."

"We are anxious to know if you could tell us anything about Mr. Grey," said Mrs. Defensor. "I was so sorry I didn't meet him on the steamer. He knew my son Richard."

Bullion nodded understandingly.

"You know Richard was killed in the war," said Joan. "A fellow officer made a brave attempt to save him and we have always wanted to get in touch, and somehow we haven't been able to. On the 'Latian' Mr. Grey told me that he was in the army, and he had met my brother, and he had also been acquainted with the officer we are in search of. It may be that he can not help us much, but there is just the possibility. He may be the very man who can put us on the track."

"What was the name of the officer who tried to rescue your brother?"

"Captain Roger Drew."

"Ah," said Bullion thoughtfully, as if searching his mind. "I'm in rather an awkward position. I can not tell you where Mr. Grey is now, but I may be able to a little later. I'll have to let you into a secret. My

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

friend is a business man and came over to complete some important negotiations, and in order to save himself from being bothered he travelled on the steamer under an assumed name. I know his real name, but I'm not at liberty to tell you what it is."

"That's curious," said the frank Joan.

"Of course we do not wish to inconvenience your friend," said Mrs. Defensor. "All we are anxious about is to find Captain Roger Drew. I can not tell you how important it is to us. Could you get a letter to your friend?"

"I might be able to. He is travelling at the moment, but if you will write him here I will do what I can."

The two ladies rose to go.

"Anything about my son means a great deal," said Mrs. Defensor, "I know you will forgive us troubling you."

"It will be a real happiness if I can help you. I believe I can."

Bullion meant what he said, but he felt himself a particularly mean type of hypocrite as he showed the ladies out.

"Come and see us soon," said Joan with outstretched hand.

## CHAPTER XI

### SPYING OUT THE LAND

“**T**HE Defensors came to get the help of Mr. George Grey in finding Captain Drew,” said Bullion as he and Roger made their way to a table in the Cafe Royal that evening.

“I thought so. I trust you were discreet.”

“I lied, if that’s what you mean.”

“Excellent. You’re a good fellow, Bullion.”

There was no more said about the Defensors till the dinner was well advanced, and till there had been a good deal of talk on less immediate matters. Roger was a mixture of oddity and gaiety, and his open-hearted mood led him, among other things, to the story of the Cincinnati girls.

“Serves you darned well right,” said Bullion shaking with merriment.

Roger spoke sadly. “I’m a confiding and deluded creature,” he said. “I’m fated. ‘Tis Providence that shapes our ends.’ ”

“There is another quotation an even older one, ‘Be sure your sin will find you out.’ ”

“Guilty: but there should be mercy for the weak. Helpless footling creatures, men.”

“Roger, I wonder you have never fallen really in love.”

The chuckle of Roger was deep seated.

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

“Dear old serious Bullion; but that’s why you are successful.”

“It won’t do; I know you better than you imagine. Heavens, if you should some day fall in love, well I can see you!”

“Divide your pity between me and the girl,” laughed Roger. “You’re in sentimental mood. You —”

“I just hated to lie about you to the Defensors today. Felt like a cur.”

The smile dropped from Roger’s eyes.

“I know. It’s a shame from your point of view, laddie. I’ll put it all right for you some day.”

“Why the deuce don’t you tell them who you are? For the life of me I can’t see your reasons.”

“I just hate to be mollycoddled, Bullion. I’m sure they are very sweet, and all that, and if things were different I would like to meet Dick Defensor’s people. But not just now. I’ve had a blow in this rubber business and I’ve got to battle up again somehow. Some day when I’m doing pretty well I’ll seek out the Defensors and make my amends.”

“They want you badly.”

“I couldn’t stand it just now. Let it go for the present. Say I’m abroad, say I’m in India, if you see them again. One of these days you shall be the god from the machine and produce me, if you want to.”

“I don’t know what they’ll think of me for deceiving them.”

“Joan Defensor will think no worse of you for standing by a friend.”

“I wish I was confident. I’m just neutral to her now. I may never be anything else.”

## SPYING OUT THE LAND

“Why has she never married?” asked Roger suddenly.

“Don’t know. I suppose she never met any one she cared for. She’s no ordinary girl. There have been plenty after her according to reports. The last rumor is about Sydenham Curfew the Home Secretary.”

“An old man?”

“No. He’s about forty-three. He’s got on swiftly. He has a place near theirs down in Surrey.”

“She won’t marry any Home Secretary,” said Roger decisively.

“I reckon she’d marry a Prime Minister or a clerk in a bank if she wanted to.”

“Aye, aye,” said Roger sagely. “But I imagine she is going to marry a rising young fellow with a good heart and sound prospects and his name is Bullion.”

“It’s early days. She knows me but slightly.”

“You’ll see,” said Roger prophetically.

“It’s good to hear. I’m not so confident. Meanwhile I wish you’d make these women happy.”

“Can’t be done in the way you want.”

“The old lady, too, makes me think of my own mother. Why you could be another son in that family if you wanted to be.”

“I don’t want to be,” said Roger. “Who are the Defensors anyway? They’ve got money haven’t they?”

“That’s only part of it. They are wealthy, but they are much prouder of their family than of their money. The family goes back to goodness knows when.” Bullion smiled, “As an American that appeals to me.”

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

“As an Englishman,” said Roger, “it leaves me stone cold.”

“You are an incorrigible, ungracious scallawag who doesn’t deserve to have good things happen to him.”

“So, so,” said Roger.

“Mrs. Defensor’s great uncle was a Prime Minister of Britain in spacious mid-Victorian times.”

“I think I heard something of that kind from Dick.”

“George Defensor who died a dozen years ago was of an old South of England family and their estate in Surrey is a princely place.”

“They live in Surrey then?”

“They have a small house in town too. Oh, Roger what chances you are missing.”

“I must have an unfortunate disposition,” said Roger. “Perhaps I’ll change it some day. Now then tell me something about the good gentleman who nearly hoofed me out of your office this morning.”

“He was quite himself again this afternoon. Look here Roger, don’t you take that business this morning too seriously.”

“It wouldn’t do any good. Just for the moment he roused in me some of the primitive instincts of aboriginal man.”

“That has happened to a lot of people. He is just a big boy in some ways.”

“I must be forgiven for thinking him rather unpleasant, but he is certainly the kind of fellow who matters.”

“I’m going to make him help you yet, Roger.”

## SPYING OUT THE LAND

“Optimist,” said Roger.

“His moods don’t mean anything to me. Let me tell you he can make a man in a day.”

“And break a man too.”

“Naturally.”

“Is he wonderfully successful in business? Is he making a lot of money?”

“Piles. He’s worked up a little just now because he has a losing game on his hands, just an incidental thing, but he can’t bear the idea of failure. He’s worked on the ‘Spur’ like a nigger; that’s Magnet all over.”

“I shan’t be broken hearted if he fails in something,” said Roger.

“You’re still sore, but there’ll come a day yet when you’ll be grateful to Magnet. Mark my words.”

“Just this evening I’m more concerned about something that is giving him trouble,” said Roger with a laugh, “what’s the story?”

“It’s annoyance more than trouble. He has stormed his way through to success so often, that obstacles or failures bring him into a mood you saw him in this morning. I told you the various industrial enterprises to which he has set his hand. Some of them he has made into paying properties just by his power of business organization, and financial organizations, too. A man with big business interests is pretty much in the position of a banker.”

“It’s a great life in some ways.”

“When a man has accumulated unassailable fortune in the shape of money his joy is in the possession of the power the money gives. Latterly Magnet has

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

seen that men with far less money have far more power. He is taking steps to remedy the position. He has bought the widely circulated but financially unsuccessful 'Daily Spur,' and he's going to use it to impress himself on wider spheres than hitherto. At the moment, for example, he is attacking a Cabinet Minister, the one I'm specially interested in, the Home Secretary. Just an idea, nothing more. He wants to get a hold on public opinion in some way. Meanwhile he is riled beyond measure that the paper should be losing money. He knows little or nothing about the technicalities of newspaper production, but of course he is a thoroughly good business man, and he has the notion that all business is pretty much alike in fundamentals."

"Vanity battling with cupidity."

"He isn't mercenary in one sense; he just hates to be associated with a losing proposition."

"If I'm a judge the people in the office are having an uncomfortable time."

"Yes. When Magnet concentrates on a business everybody feels his vital force, and he doesn't spare those who are round him. But mind this when he has pulled things through, and the business is prosperous, everybody joins in the prosperity. The fellows at the 'Daily Spur' office have got that before them if they've sense enough to see it."

"Raising their salaries?"

"More than that. He will give the editor shares, very likely made him a director. One or two of the other departmental chiefs might easily be put on the board also."

## SPYING OUT THE LAND

“Meanwhile, a severe probationary period.”

“I guess so,” said Bullion. “A newspaper is an awfully complicated and trying proposition. There are some incidental weekly publications connected with the firm. The whole thing is just an exasperating puzzle for the time being.”

“I’d like to see over the workings of a newspaper office one of these times when Magnet is not around—.”

“We get a breathing spell from tomorrow on,” said Bullion. “He leaves by the eleven o’clock train for Paris and he will be away for a fortnight or more. I don’t suffer much from him, but his mere presence is a high pressure gauge, and to tell the truth I don’t have a very happy time when I see friends like yourself coming under his lash. They don’t all take it as you did.”

“I can quite believe that,” said Roger.

“He’ll leave the office at about a quarter past ten tomorrow morning,” said Bullion. “Come in any time after that, and make yourself at home. I’ll show you the mystery of modern newspaper production, and we’ll have lunch together.”

Roger went back to his hotel with a pleasant feeling of accomplishment within him. He had learned some of Magnet’s weak points, and he revelled in them.

Once the big lighted eyes of Joan Defensor came to him, but he switched himself back to reality with a mental snort.

## CHAPTER XII

### DOINGS AT THE "DAILY SPUR"

SIR JOHN MAGNET sitting at his desk next morning, scanning some figures with narrowed eyes and mouth set square, presented signals of a mood which caused members of his staff who came with new ideas to decide suddenly that their suggestions could wait. And yet when he looked up at Bullion seated on the other side of the desk his voice was unruffled. "You stay here and keep a general eye on things while I'm away. The City people will telephone me every morning about affairs there. You had better get on the wire yourself if there is any special point as far as the paper is concerned. I shall always be in the hotel between nine and ten in the morning."

Bullion nodded.

"It's a serious thing," said Magnet, taking up one of the sheets of paper on the desk before him and looking at the figures on it. "Here is a paper with a circulation of nearly half a million a day and it is losing between seven hundred and eight hundred pounds a week. That ought not to be. Keep your mind on it while I am away. It's a hard proposition."

"We must increase the revenue from advertisements. That is really the only line."

"May be that's right," said Magnet.

He touched an electric bell and a messenger came in.

## DOINGS AT THE "DAILY SPUR"

"Send Mr. Clark, the advertisement manager, to me."

Magnet rose from his chair, and went over to a heap of that morning's newspapers on a side table. He flicked over their pages swiftly, and when Clark the advertisement manager, a little thin faced man of fifty, came into the room he had a copy of one of the papers in his hand, studying the back page.

"Clark, I see that the 'Morning Light' has a page of Rigson real estate display this morning and we didn't get it."

"They are extremely hard people to deal with, wanted fifteen percent off."

"And yet the 'Morning Light' got it."

"Yes, but that —"

"Always 'yes but,' " snapped Magnet. "I am surrounded by 'yes-buts' in this office. The 'yes-buts' would ruin any business."

His voice took on a calm note. "No doubt it was clever work by the 'Morning Light' people."

"I did all that was possible to do," said Clark.

"Do you know the advertisement manager on the 'Morning Light'?" asked Magnet.

"Yes, I know him; Meakins is his name."

"He's a good man," said Magnet. "I wonder what we could get him for?"

Clark went away with some practical suggestions of Magnet's in his ears, and in his mind an indignant wonderment as to whether Magnet had meant what he said.

"I think you'll have to reorganize the department altogether," said Bullion.

## THE ESCAPE OF ROGER DREW

“It’s the first thing to be done when I get back.” Magnet sat down at his desk. “We can’t reduce expenses in any big way can we?”

“There are wages and salaries,” said Bullion, “but it’s dangerous to touch them.”

“Magnet frowned. “It’s fatal economy to make such reduction. Indeed I’m not certain but what I’ll give Russell some shares. He seems a good fellow.”

“He is strong and energetic,” agreed Bullion.

“Then there is the question of paper. We haven’t got the reports from our accountant about the Water-side Paper Mills have we?”

“Shan’t have them for two or three days yet.”

“If it is a sound proposition I shall clinch when I come back. I’ll form a new company for this paper business. It’s good in itself, and besides that we can knock off between two and three hundred pounds of our loss by making our own paper.”

“They want a big price,” said Bullion.

“Oh, of course the two hundred thousand pounds asked is ridiculous. It may be worth a hundred and fifty. We’ll wait till we get the figures.”

Magnet took down his hat and coat from the peg behind the door.

“Tell Russell to keep on with his criticism of the Home Secretary on that Housing Bill. I was talking with Bolstrode the other day, and the ‘Daily Telegram’ is linking up with us.”

“I hear the Home Secretary is very wroth.”

“Pompous fool,” said Magnet. “Perhaps, however, we had better keep off the personal side. I may

## DOINGS AT THE "DAILY SPUR"

have to make use of him some day. Will you tell Russell?"

"All right, I'll see him when he comes in."

"Goodbye," said Magnet. "Don't forget about telephoning me if there should be anything special."

When he had gone Bullion went over to the desk, and cleared up the papers scattered over it, and then he lit a cigarette, walked into the adjoining room where there were two stenographers, and dictated some letters. He rang up the managing editor's room, and found Russell had not yet arrived, and so he talked to Fore, the news editor, and conveyed Magnet's wishes to him about the Home Secretary.

"Pity," said Fore, "I had some good stuff today. I was going to roast him good and proper."

"Cut it out," said Bullion. "Just give the hard news, and leave the comment to the leader page."

Bullion was turning himself to some accounts, which Magnet had left for his attention, when a boy came up from downstairs to say Roger Drew had called. Bullion sent for him to come up.

With the diligence and the energy of the enthusiast, Roger had been early in the neighborhood of the "Daily Spur" office and from the window of a restaurant opposite, a somewhat protracted breakfast had enabled him to watch the exit of Sir John Magnet. He guessed that the financier was to make a call at his City office, since his car started eastward instead of turning round by the Embankment on the way to Victoria. Presently Bullion confirmed his conjecture.

Roger went up to Magnet's room with a strange general purpose, but no definite plan. He had learned

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

something about the newspaper, and desired if possible to increase his knowledge to the point where he could take some damaging action against the proprietor — the governing consideration being that he should do as much harm to Magnet as was possible in the limited period at his disposal. A fortnight was a space which had obvious prospects. To make the chance, to seize the skirts of chance, that was his policy, and as each day would now be valuable he was thinking of asking Bullion if it would be feasible for him to write some light articles on his travels for the paper. This would give him an introduction to Russell, the editor, and secure for him the right of entry to the office for the couple of weeks. It would be hard indeed if in that time he could not find opening for a thrust at Magnet.

Roger was not at all troubled by tremors as to the honorable nature of his undertaking, because morality of the forgiving type had no part in his composition. Frequently impetuous he was curiously insensitive in certain kinds of emergencies, and this was one of them. Abasement was in him at the indignity he had suffered from Magnet, and his self respect craved for adjustment. He would have laughed bitterly at any questioning of his method. He was moreover not in the least concerned in the fact that he was playing traitor to the kindness of his friend Bullion. Bullion was part of Magnet, sharing in his successes, endorsing his procedures, and though he apparently had had nothing to do with the trick which robbed the American company of the property entrusted to Roger yet he would presently benefit by the same robbery. Some inconvenience, some annoyance, a touch of disgust, they

## DOINGS AT THE "DAILY SPUR"

were not too heavy a price for Bullion to pay for association with Magnet. And Roger was going to use him. He was the one instrument to hand.

"You missed the old man by a close shave," said Bullion when Roger came in.

"Watched him go. I took no chances of butting into the good gentleman after my last encounter."

"Probably he would have been as sweet as sugar to you."

"No chance of that for me," said Roger.

"You can sit in his chair," said Bullion motioning Roger over to the proprietor's desk, "and you may even smoke one of his cigarettes from the box there while I go down stairs and see if Russell the editor has come in. I have to talk with him for a few minutes."

Roger made himself comfortable, and as Bullion went out he said, "I rather fancy this job. What about me as the great brain force in control?"

Later on Roger recalled that flippancy, and gravely asked himself before the mirror in his bedroom whether he had been suddenly gifted with the power of prophecy.

With his feet irreverently tossed up on to Magnet's desk, Roger was glancing through the morning's paper when there was a ring at the telephone by his elbow. Almost mechanically he took off the receiver to answer the call, and he heard a man's deep voice saying, "Is that Sir John Magnet?"

With nerves on edge Roger was unconsciously ready for some apt accident, some lucky combination, to rush him into surprising and devastating action. In his search for methods of reprisal there had never

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

occurred the idea of the impersonation of Sir John Magnet. And yet so swift are the processes of mind and heart in times of subconscious excitement, that the question of this unknown man over the telephone was like some chemical element which suddenly resolves and fixes a chaotic mixture into a clear definite and distinctive whole. Roger's purpose had formed and hardened itself in the fraction of time between the words from the stranger and his own reply. His gift of mimicry, the absence of Bullion, the departure of Magnet, the scope for the immediate future all these things came upon him like a vision.

It was with some disguise of his own tones that he answered, "Yes this is Sir John Magnet's office. Who wants him?"

"One moment please, Mr. Carter of the Waterside Paper Mills wishes to speak to Sir John." There was a pause of a few seconds, and then came another voice.

"Mr. Carter speaking. Is that you Sir John?"

In the deep clear cut note of the financier Roger said, "Speaking. Is that you Mr. Carter?"

"How do you do, Sir John? I would like to know if you have made a decision about the purchase. We have a board meeting this afternoon."

Roger took a chance as to the relevance of his reply.

"Tell them, yes, with some modifications. Of course it's a big price."

"It's a big business."

"Well we won't quarrel about that. I've made my decision. There was one point I wanted to raise. Just run over the terms."

## DOINGS AT THE "DAILY SPUR"

"Two hundred thousand pounds, a quarter of the preferred stock, and two seats on the new board which shall have not more than five members."

"I remember now. It's about representation on the board. I think you are only entitled to one seat instead of two. I'll pay the price if you see to that."

"I can't promise offhand but it seems reasonable, and I'll talk to them this afternoon."

"If you fix the thing make an appointment for the lawyers."

"Would it not be better for me to come and see you yourself?"

"I'm leaving for Paris immediately. Communicate with me there at the Grand Hotel. I shall be back in two weeks. I want the whole affair in train by then."

"Certainly. Perhaps since the matter is so important I may come over to Paris and see you."

"Good idea, but don't come before the end of this week. I shall be very busy for a few days."

"All right. I'll meet your convenience."

"Very well, say Saturday. I'm busy now getting ready to leave." Roger snapped the telephone down in just the abrupt manner he imagined Sir John Magnet would have done in the circumstances.

## CHAPTER XIII

### PLUNGING DEEPER

**R** OGER with nerves a-tingle did some quick thinking in the next few minutes. He had struck at a venture, with a success which might have been disconcerting to some but which to Roger was rich with inspiration. The field of action was revealed, and his spirit bounded upward. He took a swift glance at the possibilities. The Waterside Paper Mills project was but the beginning, and his imagination was racing ahead from the moment he hung up the telephone receiver.

He looked at the little gilt clock on the mantelpiece, and saw the time was twenty-eight minutes past ten, and he knew that the train left Victoria for Paris at eleven. To get to Victoria, to telephone an important message or two, and to do it before the train left for Paris, this was his immediate task. Roger went through the door of Magnet's room to the outer office where the two girl stenographers were at work. They looked up as he entered. "Will you tell Mr. Bullion that I have gone back to my hotel for some papers which I forgot to bring along with me. Tell him I'll be back again within an hour."

He hurried into the corridor, praying Fate that he might not meet Bullion on the way down, and there was boyish exultation in him when he reached the street without notice. He put his hat firmly on his head, and

## PLUNGING DEEPER

raced to the underground station at Blackfriars Bridge, and a few minutes later was in the train on his way to Victoria.

There are a multiplicity of telephones at Victoria Station and Roger, arriving at about eighteen minutes to eleven, took care to secure one at some distance from the platform, in order to avert, as far as he might be, the risk of encountering Magnet or being perceived by him. When he had obtained connection with the "Daily Spur" private exchange he asked not for Bullion but for Russell the editor. He had prepared the way by telling the telephone operator in the proper tone of voice that it was Sir John who wished to speak to Russell, and he was rewarded by a quick linking up, and the sound of the editor's voice with a touch of deference in it. "Is that you Sir John?"

"Russell, I have been turning things over in my mind in the last half an hour, and I have had a talk with a friend of mine here, who happens to be travelling on the same train with me to Paris. Have you a piece of paper handy, and a pencil? I want you to take down some instructions."

"I'm quite ready," said the editor, "go ahead."

"In the first place I want to change the policy about the Home Secretary. You must not attack Mr. Curfew personally, I also want to change our policy towards his new Bill. Tonight have written a leading article which shall pave the way for a complete change of policy on the next morning. Indicate tonight that modifications in the Bill meet our approval. You can find what reasons you like. See that they are plausible ones. Then tomorrow come out flat-footed in support

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

of Curfew and his Bill. Do you understand all that, and have you got it down?"

"Yes; all right."

"I was talking to Bullion about the matter this morning. I want you to discuss it with him. Tell him there is business behind. Get him to help you in any way he sees fit. Is that clear?"

"Yes. I'll go up to him."

"Wait a minute. If Mr. Bolstrode the proprietor of the 'Daily Telegram' gets in touch with you about our change of policy make your apologies on my behalf. You know we had rather joined together in this campaign on the Home Secretary, and I don't want to seem discourteous. I am sending Bolstrode a telegram from here. I haven't time to ring him up, and talk the matter over. If you have any doubts accept Bullion's judgment. Tell Bullion to ring me up the day after tomorrow at my Paris hotel. Get that?"

"Yes."

"One thing more. Take this down carefully. At the end of this week the whole of the editorial staff are to have a ten percent increase."

"Ten percent?" repeated the astounded Russell.

"Yes. Ten percent," snapped Magnet. "Isn't it plain? Are your ears stopped up?"

"Sorry, Sir John."

"Mind you I'm not doing this out of charity. I'm spending more money because I don't want to lose so much. You fellows have got to make the paper pay."

"I'll give the right impression to all the staff, Sir John. Oh, here's Mr. Bullion coming into the room just now. Would you like to speak to him?"

## PLUNGING DEEPER

“Yes quick I’ve only got a few minutes. Bullion is that you? I have told Russell to change our policy with regard to Curfew and to give the editorial staff a ten percent rise. He has taken a shorthand note, and will let you have a memorandum. Tell Russell I’m going to put him on the board of directors.”

“Is there any special reason for doing all this so quickly?”

“Very special. I can’t stop to explain. See what I’ve dictated to Russell. Get me the day after tomorrow at the Paris hotel. I must hurry off now.”

Roger hung up the receiver. He had a gratifying sense of work well done.

A visit to a neighboring telegraph office, and the dispatch of a telegram to Bolstrode occupied another ten minutes, and by this time the Paris train was on the move out of the station.

“Life after all has some little satisfactions,” Roger said to himself as he went down to the underground station.

Half an hour later he was back in Magnet’s room at the “Daily Spur” to find his friend Bullion with contracted brow looking at the memorandum he had received from Russell.

“I popped back to the hotel, to get some articles I wrote for the New York papers,” said Roger. “I wanted you to see them. Perhaps under another name I might be able to do something for the paper.” He drew from his pocket an envelope with some cuttings.

“I’ll see what can be done,” said Bullion, “but I’m puzzling my head about another matter altogether just now.”

## THE ESCAPE OF ROGER DREW

“What’s up?” said Roger.

“I was telling you this morning about our policy with the Home Secretary. Here’s the old man telephoning Russell from Victoria altering everything. Goodness knows what his game is. He may have met Curfew in the station for all I know.”

In a sentence or two he told Roger of the instructions transmitted over the telephone.

“Why he didn’t telephone me instead of Russell in the first place I don’t know. That’s just like him. He’ll go over the head of one of his chiefs, and you can never tell where you are. I came into the room just in time to get his few final words. I ought to have known the way his mind was working from his conversation this morning. I told you about it. Why he should have jumped so suddenly is one of those mysteries which is continually occurring.”

“Perhaps he’ll change his mind again when he gets to Paris,” said Roger.

“Not he. However sudden are his decisions he sticks to them. I think he is crazy to put up the salaries here at present. I don’t see how its going to help him in the least. Giving Russell a place on the board is the one sensible thing in his whole message so far as I can see.”

“I wouldn’t have your job, Bullion, for twenty thousand pounds a year. There would be moments when for the sake of one hearty kick at my proprietor I would sacrifice my whole fortune present and future.”

“You don’t get him right,” said Bullion. “He is queer but he is a genius. Now I’ll bet anything that though his message this morning seems so erratic there

## PLUNGING DEEPER

is hard good business involved, and that the result will more than justify it. I have a blind faith in his judgment. I'm bound to have. I have seen what's happened in the past."

Roger listened to his friend with cordial interest, and, here and there, made a helpful suggestion, and all the while as the talk went on his ears were pricked for the sound of the telephone bell. He was anxious that Bolstrode should ring up without much delay for he had a fear that the proprietor of the "Daily Telegram" might take it into his head to come round and see Bullion at the office. He distrusted the possibilities of a personal interview of that kind. He grew more and more impatient.

It was about half past twelve when Bullion went out of the room on some errand, and Roger decided hastily on a hazardous step. Better the risks he knew than those he knew not of. He called up the "Daily Telegram" and asked for Bolstrode. Directly the latter spoke he expunged Roger's fears. "Only just come in," he said. "I was late this morning. I gathered from your telegram you were on the way to Paris."

"Called back to the office on special business," said Roger in Magnet's voice. "I shall probably be leaving by the two o'clock train."

"Sorry you are letting up on Curfew," said Bolstrode. "But I'm going to carry on alone. What's the idea?"

"I can't very well tell you over the telephone but I have good cause for the change."

"Since reading your message I have been

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

wondering if there was anything in this rumor that you were going to get rid of the 'Daily Spur.' "

"Get rid of this paper?"

"Yes. Don't think me rude. We are none of us making a fortune these times. I was wondering if your change of policy with regard to Curfew indicated anything of the kind."

Roger noted a tone of superiority in Bolstrode which he well understood. Magnet, a highly successful man in many directions, was a failure in newspaper work, and Bolstrode who owned many publications, some of them quite profitable, was indulging in an accent of patronage to which Magnet must be unaccustomed. Roger decided to uphold the prestige of Magnet.

"You are talking nonsense, Bolstrode. I'm in the habit of turning unprofitable businesses into paying ones. I'm engaged on that now. By the way have you ever thought of disposing of the 'Daily Telegram'?"

Bolstrode laughed. "What, do you want to buy it?" There was a touch of derision in his voice.

"It is not a very good speculation," said the imaginary Magnet with a certain grave deliberation, "but if it had life put into it —"

"Talk figures," said Bolstrode sharply, "and I'll listen to you."

"Well if anything round a quarter of a million pounds, subject of course to some investigation, would meet the case I might be prepared to look into it."

Bolstrode's mental turmoil was easily to be imagined. He knew quite well that Magnet was one of the very few men who could talk in terms of such mag-

## PLUNGING DEEPER

nitude. It was hard to undergo this turning of the tables, but Bolstrode had a strong business sense.

“If you are really serious I’ll think about it.”

“I’m quite serious. Write me to the Grand Hotel at Paris.”

When Bullion came into the room again Roger was placidly smoking one of Magnet’s cigarettes, reflecting on the peaceful journey which Magnet was now enjoying, and the stimulation which would meet him in the course of the next two or three days.

## CHAPTER XIV

### BULLION AND THE LADIES

**W**HILE Roger was busy with his program of business adventures for Sir John Magnet and all connected with him, Bullion was engaged with a half-formed plan to put careless casual Roger on the path to happiness. There had been disappointment for Bullion in his friend's obstinacy about the Defensors. He ached to do the two women kindness. He had steady courage, this young business man, but he was timid about Joan Defensor. It was part of his temperament that he shrank from what must be her first knowledge of his tenderness for her. She affected him like a strain of music. He found himself possessed of a dog-like faithfulness; to please her was a joy to him, even though she knew nothing of his feelings. Bullion was in possession of the secret of immediate happiness, and he knew it. With a kind of exaltation he sought plans to make Roger Drew known to Mrs. Defensor and her daughter.

Roger's lack of interest puzzled him. At a loose end, disappointed in business, with scanty prospects, and no domestic links Roger pushed aside as of no account the rooted friendship of the Defensors. His very affection for Dick Defensor might have drawn him to them. They could bring nothing but pleasantness to his life, and might even bring prosperity. And

## BULLION AND THE LADIES

yet with emptiness in front of him he sought to avoid them, to keep his life vacant, objectless, friendless. If Roger had been enmeshed in business, in ambition, in some strong purpose, his attitude would have been comprehensible. The only common-sense explanation was that Roger was veined with an exaggerated delicacy, a fear that favors would be thrust upon him, an aversion from the sentiment which must be manifested when the mother and sister of his dead friend met face to face the stranger who by his very reticence had become transformed into something like a hero. It was too stupid.

At luncheon on the day Magnet left for Paris, Bullion tried again to persuade Roger to go and see the Defensors, and was met with a half sneer.

“I find it difficult to eat out of anybody’s hand.”

“Sometimes you display yourself a perfect fool.”

Bullion for once was nettled.

“Environment and progenitors, so the professors say.”

Bullion raised his hand in a gesture of despair. For the rest of the luncheon he said nothing more about the Defensors, but he was making up his mind to action. He chatted freely about his office work, and presently as they rose to leave he said, “I shall be busy this afternoon. I’ve got to get back.”

“I wish you’d look over those articles I left at the office.”

“All right I’ll see what can be done. Come up tomorrow morning. What are you doing with yourself today?”

“I’ve got some letters to write.”

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

Roger did not explain that he carried in his pocket some note paper from the "Daily Spur" office on which the letters were to be written.

That afternoon Bullion went up to see the Defensors, and was received like an old friend.

"I hope you have come to tell us that you have some trace of Captain Drew," said Mrs. Defensor.

"Yes and no," said Bullion. "I have come up to talk to you about the matter, but I'm afraid I haven't got a great deal to reveal."

"Mother regards you as our pivot now," said Joan. "Somehow or other we think that through you we shall presently hear of him."

"There have been greater improbabilities, and I have at least something to tell you. Roger Drew and I were friends together at Cambridge years ago."

"Splendid," said Joan. "I'm quite sure now that one of these days you will bring him to us."

"I don't want to raise your hopes too high but you will see why I am interested, and why I want to be of any assistance I can."

"I'm so glad you came," said Mrs. Defensor. "We would like to hear something about the younger days of my son's friend."

"And what about this mysterious other friend Mr. Grey?" asked Joan. "Have you been in touch with him at all? Will he do anything for us?"

"I think he might, and that is really what I've come here to see you about."

"Mr. Bullion, it is so good of you to take an interest in this affair for us," said Mrs. Defensor. "You don't know how much it means."

## BULLION AND THE LADIES

"I know Roger Drew was an excellent good fellow."

"It wasn't altogether his attempt to save Richard," said Joan, "but his friendship with him during those many terrible months beforehand. Somehow we got to feel he was one of us. Dick used to write and tell us all kinds of little things."

"Yes, I understand old Roger pretty well," said Bullion.

"It sometimes seemed very strange to me," said Mrs. Defensor, "that Richard thought so much of him. He must have been a good man."

"It would tickle Roger Drew tremendously to know he was described as being good, Mrs. Defensor."

Joan smiled understandingly. She went over to a desk, and got out a bundle of letters, and selected some of them. "Let me read you an extract or two," she said.

"Richard was very colloquial," said Mrs. Defensor.

"I shan't be shocked," and Bullion exchanged a smile with Joan.

"Listen to this," said the latter.

"We had to fall back from this section last night. In other words we had to run away. Fine confession that, but we didn't do it willingly. Large numbers of the Boches were getting around us, and we were suddenly ordered to tumble back, had indeed to scramble out of our dugout. There was a terrific noise, we didn't know what was happening in the mud and the rain and the darkness,

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

and we just ploughed on, following some general directions which had been sent to us hurriedly over the telephone. There wouldn't have been any telephone wires at all if we had waited another ten minutes and I don't suppose there would have been much of us left to attend to any telephone. Drew was full of quips and cranks until we got back into comparative safety, and then I have never known a man more violent in his language, and that is saying something here at the front. I was surprised because Drew is never very bitter. He goes out and kills the Boche with a light heart. I don't think he ever hated them very particularly till this night. Of course it was touch and go with us, but I never thought that a little sudden thing like this could make him get the wind up. Nerves had never troubled him before, and here he was crazy with rage. He used language which would make your hair curl, and became suddenly one of those soldiers we read about in books who threaten terrible things in vengeance against their enemies. It came out after a quarter of an hour's impassioned oratory what it was all about. Drew had had to leave behind his only raincoat and an extra pair of socks. You ought to have heard what he said about the Germans who got them . . .

I began to feel something like him in the early hours of the morning. It was still raining like the deuce, and cold as charity, and we were switched off in a car to lend a hand, four or five miles away along on the right. When we were shot off suddenly from our dugout I had been indulging in a rub-

## BULLION AND THE LADIES

down, and slipped on my shirt and tunic without any undervest. My teeth were chattering, I can tell you. We had an hour's rest in a little old wooden shed and then the bunch of us, there were four altogether, were split up for various duties. I was jolly glad when old Roger pulled a cotton singlet out of his tunic pocket and gave it to me. 'Salvaged,' he said, 'I crammed this into my pocket as we skeedaddled, and left behind a brand new mackintosh and some newly washed socks. Curse them.' He was referring to the Germans. It wasn't till a week later when we met again that I found old Drew had taken advantage of our hour's rest in the hut to slip off his own undervest and give it to me because he thought I would die of cold. He always had an idea that because I was thin I was delicate. He lied like a Prussian when I charged him with it, but one of the other fellows saw his trick'."

"He can lie, all right, when he needs to," said Bullion. "He prides himself on it."

"I think he was a very brave and gentle man," said Mrs. Defensor.

"He would use his American slang and call that sob-stuff. He would laugh at it."

"Yes," said Joan, "and I for one should know exactly what importance to attach to it if he laughed."

"Just a word of warning," said Bullion. "He has many good qualities but you mustn't think he's a saint. I don't want you to be disappointed."

"You can't disillusion us," said Mrs. Defensor.

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

“I don’t care how callous or shallow he is, I know what he did for my son.”

“That’s natural enough,” said Bullion. “But I don’t want you to get wrong ideas about him. You see I’m looking forward to bringing you in touch with him one of these times.”

“Listen to this,” said Joan. “Richard wrote us and told us that in one of his serious minutes he and others had formulated a little goodbye letter in case any of them should be killed. My mother had his own. Captain Drew showed his to Dick which was a curious thing anyway, because such letters ought to be sacred.”

“Just like old Drew,” said Bullion. “Nothing sacred about him.”

“Well this is to his aunt down in Gloucestershire, a somewhat prim and formal lady, the wife of a clergyman there. We have been in touch with her about Captain Drew’s whereabouts but she is as ignorant as we are.”

“What did he write?” asked Bullion.

“Here is what my brother said about it:

“ ‘Drew has just shown me his goodbye letter. It is to his aunt whom he has seen very little of, and to whom, on the whole, I think he is very ungrateful. He just hates the staid respectability of the family. He told her he would be dead when that reached her. He said, he had been afraid so many times that it was nice to think that he would be regarded as a hero when he was gone. All soldiers are afraid, he said, only some are more afraid than others. He was one of the worst. He didn’t want

## BULLION AND THE LADIES

them to have any false ideas about him. He wished his aunt happiness and prosperity, thanking her for her well-meant intentions regarding him, and begged her and the other members of the household to put him out of memory as soon as possible as the worthless member of a highly respectable family. He told Dick he saw no sense in writing such letters. He did it to be in the fashion. He won his D. S. O. three days after that'."

"Strange mixture," said Bullion.

"You have heard," said Mrs. Defensor, "of how he tried to save Richard on that dark night?"

"Yes, yes," said Bullion, hurriedly. He saw the elder woman's eyes were dimming.

Joan came to the rescue. "May I be quite practical, Mr. Bullion?" she said. "We have in our mind that a man like Captain Drew may very well have drifted away into misfortune. My mother and I are not just silly sentimental women, but we feel there is nothing now which would give us so much satisfaction and happiness as to know Captain Drew, and be friends with him. Understanding something of his temperament it would not only be stupid but almost insulting to suggest that we could help him in any material way. I know we should never see him if anything of that sort occurred to his mind. But we would like to convey to him, if it were possible, to do so, that he would be giving happiness to my mother and myself in his acquaintanceship."

Bullion stood up to go. "I am hoping to be able to arrange a meeting for both of you through Mr.

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

George Grey whom you met on the 'Latian'. I can not tell you more than that I believe he knows a good deal more than we of Roger Drew. He certainly saw a good deal of him. If he liked to take the trouble I believe he could help you. You must try to persuade him."

"I did try on the ship," said Joan.

"Well you'll have your mother's assistance this time."

"Yes, I think I could persuade him," said Mrs. Defensor. "That is if he is a real nice sort of man."

"I think he is quite nice," said Joan. "I liked him and that in spite of the fact that I don't think he wanted to be bothered with me."

"Would it be asking too much," said Bullion, "if, should the possibility suddenly occur, I rang you up on the telephone from the 'Daily Spur' office and asked you to come down there?"

"We should be really and truly indebted to you," said Mrs. Defensor.

"We would come at once," said Joan.

## CHAPTER XV

### MAGNET'S DAY IN PARIS

ON HIS second morning in Paris Sir John Magnet, ringing for his coffee and rolls had brought up to him a letter from Mr. Bolstrode, in London, and, having spread the letter open in front of him, was so amazed by its contents that he scalded his lips with hot coffee. The waiter, who did not understand those samples of English used by Magnet in the excitement of the moment, went downstairs and explained that the Englishman was mad. The maître d'hotel, who knew more of Englishmen in Paris than the waiter, shook his head understandingly and sent up some bacon and eggs. The waiter, carrying this addition to the breakfast knocked gently at Magnet's door, and hearing a grunt which he took for an invitation to enter, carried in the bacon and eggs. Magnet was on his feet, the letter lying by his plate, while the early edition of the "Daily Spur" was clutched in his hand. During the waiter's absence he had not only read Bolstrode's inexplicable communication again, but had also seen in the "Daily Spur" a leading article showering fulsome praise on the Home Secretary, for long his bitter enemy. The waiter took the expression on the visitor's face for that of hunger, and set the dish before him with a pleasing deprecating word.

"What's this?" roared Magnet.

The waiter removed the cover. Magnet took one steady look, then seized the tray with the intention of

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

throwing the contents into the fireplace. He restrained himself, replaced the tray on the table and roared at the waiter. "I want a telephone, you fool. Where's the telephone?"

The waiter fled from the room to convey the news that the Englishman's madness had become homicidal owing to the delay in providing him with the bacon and eggs.

The misunderstanding was removed by Magnet, who close on the waiter's heels, said strong things in such rapid words that the maître d'hotel had the impression a mistake had been made in not bringing up the telephone on a plate instead of the bacon and eggs. Eventually by the expenditure of much nervous force on Magnet's part the matter was sifted out, and a telephone call was put through to London.

While waiting for connection with the unsuspecting Russell, Magnet mentally strove to get a grasp of the situation, and for more understanding read through again the leading article about the Home Secretary. Rage and wonderment battled within him. He dropped the paper and turned to the letter from the proprietor of the "Daily Telegram." The letter was as follows:—

"Dear Sir John:

Your message of yesterday has caused me considerable thought, for you will realize that the sentimental value of the 'Daily Telegram' to the Bolstrode family is almost equal to its monetary value. Frankly it is difficult to part with it. At the same time with the interest of the other shareholders in view it has been impossible to refuse

## MAGNET'S DAY IN PARIS

consideration to your offer. I may say that my own opinion, in view of all the circumstances, is that we ought to accept it. There are formalities to be met in the preliminary stage because interests other than my own have to be considered, but I think you may take it from me that the sum you mentioned, namely two hundred and fifty thousand pounds, will be acceptable. The affair is so important that I have decided to follow you to Paris in order that we may discuss arrangements personally. I am sure you will agree that this will be much more satisfactory. I hope I shall not be intruding if I come to your hotel tomorrow evening.

Yours very sincerely,  
John Bolstrode."

The effect of the letter on Sir John Magnet's face and gestures each time he read it can be prepared to the effect of a mouthful of unsuspectedly sour gooseberries united with the sensation of a sudden and acute toothache.

"The brazen bulbous-headed fool," said Magnet to himself. "If I didn't know his writing I should say it was a forgery. The man's in delirium. Here, waiter, send off this telegram." He hastily scribbled the following message: "John Bolstrode, 'Daily Telegram', London. Don't come, you have made great mistake. Magnet." He received a reply some hours later from Fleet Street stating that Bolstrode was already on his way. Before this message arrived, however, Magnet had managed to get in communication with Russell on the telephone.

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

Now the Paris-London telephone is a thing of moods, sometimes comparatively clear, at other times perverse and fretful, and on all occasions requiring skilful coaxing and firmness. Magnet was in no frame of mind to palter with the thing. As soon as he heard Russell's voice he bellowed: "What about this leading article?" and it was unfortunate that this reached Russell as "I see you got the leading article." "Yes," said Russell, "I hope it's what you want." Russell, being calm, made his words heard quite distinctly, wherein he had a great advantage over his employer. There ensued an exchange of sentences so interesting that it stopped a detailed discussion between two telephone girls with regard to the merits of their respective sweethearts.

"What the blazes does the article mean? Why are we praising him? Are you all gone daft?"

"Speak up," urged Russell, "I can't hear you very well."

Magnet holding in his feelings with a great effort shouted at the top of his voice. "Why have you been praising him?"

"Oh no, I don't think that," said Russell.

"Think what?"

"That he'll believe we're playing with him."

"Lunatic," ejaculated Magnet.

"Speak up," said Russell. "I really can't hear you."

Magnet pulled himself together. He talked into the telephone with slow, loud, soulful intensity. "Did you get my message?" Russell heard this, every word

## MAGNET'S DAY IN PARIS

of it. "Yes," he said, "and we're all very much obliged to you."

"Obliged," screamed Magnet.

"The sub-editors are delighted."

"Oh, are they," spluttered the great man.

"Personally also I am indebted."

"Blue Heavens," said Magnet. He put up the telephone apparatus, and gazed at it as though it contained the seeds of a mortal disease.

He took a cab to the Post Office and sent Russell a telegram containing more adjectives than is usual in a business communication. It was apparent economy was no object to him.

He felt better after sending this, and turned his mind to the principal purpose of his visit to Paris, which was the inspection of some new printing machines at the office of one of the Paris papers. The American engineer in charge of the machines found to his surprise that Magnet was a quiet-mannered man who sucked up information like a sponge, and who, in examination of the presses, proceeded to point out small defects which only a mechanical expert should be aware of. The occupation eased Magnet. True, at one moment when the manager showing off a new octuple press said, "She'll turn out one hundred and twenty thousand copies an hour easy," he retorted. "He wants a quarter of a million."

"Who does?" asked the surprised engineer.

"Oh, never mind," said Magnet.

"The man who wants a quarter of a million an hour out of a machine is a fool," said the engineer now thoroughly roused.

## THE ESCAPE OF ROGER DREW

“Yes,” said Magnet mildly.

“A quarter of a million!” repeated the perturbed engineer.

Magnet went back to his hotel to find an answer from the “Daily Telegram” office that Bolstrode was on his way.

“He’s trying to bluff me,” said Magnet to himself. “Didn’t think he had it in him.”

During the afternoon Bolstrode arrived. A well-groomed man of sixty, self-important and more than a little domineering, he was prepared to be gracious to Magnet in view of the munificence of the financier’s offer.

“Well, Sir John,” he said. “I never thought to be discussing with you the sale and purchase of the ‘Daily Telegram.’ ”

“It had never entered my head either,” said Magnet dryly, waiting for the other to show his hand.

“The ‘Daily Telegram’,” said Sir John, “was established one hundred and fifty years ago, and it was the most prosperous paper in the United Kingdom at a time when you were at school.

“Times alter,” said Magnet.

“The ‘Daily Telegram’ is a household word through two continents,” went on Bolstrode.

“What’s the circulation now?” asked Magnet.

“Not so much as the ‘Daily Spur’, of course,” said Bolstrode, “but then the ‘Daily Spur’ is a very different kind of production.”

“Very,” was the reply. “But what did you say the circulation of the ‘Telegram’ was.”

“With a paper of the calibre and reputation of the

## MAGNET'S DAY IN PARIS

'Daily Telegram' an immense circulation is not of so much importance. Doubtless you have some idea of what it sells each day.'

"A rough idea," said Magnet.

"And it wouldn't be for its circulation that you desired to acquire it."

"Yes, I think I can go as far as that. But shall we say 200,000 a day?"

"I really don't follow the daily figures very much but I should think that would be about it."

Magnet took a small diary from his pocket, turned up the letter T and said "The Circulation of the 'Daily Telegram' for the last week has ranged from 57,000 to 62,000 copies a day. Its circulation the day before yesterday was 58,160."

Bolstrode was staggered. "I really didn't know the actual figures," he said.

"Just as well to look them up when you're going to sell a property," said Magnet pleasantly.

A thought struck Bolstrode. "How do you become possessed of private figures of that kind?" he asked.

"Oh just through the ordinary channels," was the reply. "I secure every morning the exact circulation figures of every paper in London."

Though Bolstrode did not say, "You are an unscrupulous rogue," it was not hard for Magnet to gather that was in his mind.

He strove hard for self command.

"Well, since you know all about it your offer has an added weight. You have, no doubt, some good reason for buying."

"Even as you have for selling."

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

“Yes, there are exactly one quarter million good reasons for my selling the paper.”

“Indeed, and what is their nature?”

“They are golden reasons, and you know their nature quite well.” Bolstrode laughed heartily.

“I really fail to understand you, Mr. Bolstrode.”

“Fail to understand me?”

“Your visit here, I mean.”

“But you had my letter.”

“Yes, and perhaps you will be good enough to explain that also.”

Bolstrode stared at Magnet. Then he said: “You rang me up on the telephone the other day and offered me two hundred and fifty thousand pounds for the ‘Daily Telegram’.”

“Did I, by Jove.”

“And when I write you saying I am coming to see you about it you express surprise.”

Magnet swiftly brought the matter to a head.

“You know as well as I do, Mr. Bolstrode, that I have never offered you any money for the ‘Daily Telegram’, that I have never approached you directly or indirectly with regard to its purchase, and that is why I now ask you what is your little game?”

Bolstrode had heard much of the audacity of Sir John Magnet, but had never conceived it possible that it could reach such heights. “Do I understand you seriously to say that you have never made an offer for the ‘Daily Telegram’, Sir John?”

“That is precisely the meaning of my words.”

“Very well, sir. To that I have to reply that two days ago you rang me up at my office and, after some

## MAGNET'S DAY IN PARIS

conversation about the Home Secretary, you asked me to sell you the 'Daily Telegram' and offered me two hundred and fifty thousand pounds for it."

"I must have been asleep," said Magnet blandly.

"Asleep!"

"Yes, because I don't remember anything about it."

"But you spoke to me yourself."

"It must certainly have been in my sleep, if I did, because my real offer to you for the 'Daily Telegram' would have been a ten pound note instead of a quarter of a million."

"So it was a joke."

"I really don't know what your name is, Mr. Bolstrode. But if I had been in your place I should have adopted a more plausible story to secure this interview."

"You're a scoundrel, sir," exclaimed the infuriated Bolstrode.

"But I am not a fool," said Magnet, "and that is what you appear to be. I hope you will have had profit out of your trip to Paris."

"I will expose you, sir, expose you in the columns of my paper."

"Any little advertisement is welcome in these times," said Magnet. "Pity your circulation isn't bigger."

Bolstrode could not trust himself to speak, and he went down into the hall to find out what time he could get a train back to London.

Magnet was entertained by Parisian friends that night and he managed to lose his sense of annoyance

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

for the time being, but as he started to walk back to the hotel his mind swung to the astounding occurrences of the morning. Magnet knew he had many enemies, and he wondered if he were suffering from the effects of some ill natured trick. On reflection he was convinced that Bolstrode was innocent in the matter and was quite sincere. He allowed himself a smile at the reflection that Bolstrode must be at least as angry as he himself was.

From the time Magnet had taken over the "Daily Spur" six months previously he had found the business a source of irritation as well as of loss, and although there were some compensations, he began, during the walk back to his hotel to wonder for the first time whether he had done well in breaking new ground with this newspaper work. There would probably be but little money in it, even if he were successful. Was the game worth the candle? It was in this mood of initial disgust with journalistic ventures in general that he reached the Grand Hotel and found the following telegram awaiting him.

"Sir John Magnet,  
Grand Hotel,  
Paris.

The directors of the 'Evening Argus' will be pleased to meet you and discuss with you your offer of one hundred and fifty thousand pounds for the paper.

Charles O'Grady,  
Chairman."

## CHAPTER XVI

### ROGER'S LIE

**B**ULLION was promptly at work at his new task. On the day following his visit to Mrs. Defensor and Joan he sent them a telephoned request that they should go to the "Daily Spur" office that afternoon. He had made arrangements he said that on their arrival they should be shown up to him at once in Sir John Magnet's room.

The invitation with all that it implied was an excitement both for mother and daughter. They led quiet lives, mixing little with the society with which they were in touch, although once in a while they gave a dinner to a group of friends, and two or three times in the summer made a point of entertaining at their beautiful place in Surrey. The loss of Richard Defensor had opened a gap in their lives, and had taken away many an interest which linked them with the outside world. Though it could hardly be said that the two women were devoting their lives to finding Richard's friend, it was none the less true that the expectation of discovering him provided a constant source of thought and a stimulation. The mystery of his disappearance, the difficulty of ascertaining his whereabouts, perhaps deepened their desire, added something to their affectionate curiosity. The search for him made Richard Defensor live again to them. The dead man was not entirely gone while his intimate

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

associate was somewhere and at some time available. Joan's talk on the steamer with the stranger, and Bullion's kindly help, had stirred both the girl and her mother, and the communication from Bullion asking them to go to the City that afternoon gave them a hope, shadowy, but pleasant.

"It grows on me," said Mrs. Defensor, "that Captain Drew isn't alive any more, or he would have come to us."

"Perhaps we have idealised him a little too much," said Joan. "He might not have been so close to Richard as we like to think, and possibly we are not nearly of as much interest to him as he is to us. Of course I know he was most kind to Dick."

"You're wrong, Joan. I know that man. If he is alive he is keeping away from us out of some quite nice feeling. He doesn't want to intrude, he feels we shall be over grateful to him. I'm sure it is something of that kind."

"It's curious that I can't put Mr. Grey out of my mind, the man we met on the steamer."

"Captain Drew is the only one I'm concerned with," said Mrs. Defensor. "I wonder if there is the slightest chance that Mr. Bullion has found him."

"Judging from his message I don't think so. I believe we are going to meet this 'Mr. Grey', as he calls himself. I wonder what his real name is. We shall meet him this afternoon, and we shall probably be told. I am certain Mr. Bullion is going to have him there in order to introduce him."

Their guesses were getting near to the mark. Bullion had staged a little comedy which he hoped

## ROGER'S LIE

might have a happy ending for his friend. He had the idea that Roger Drew with his responsive temperament, suddenly placed under the influence of mother and daughter, might acknowledge the truth about himself. The absence of Magnet gave the opportunity for the arrangement of the little drama.

So it came to pass that when Mrs. Defensor and Joan arrived at the "Daily Spur" office, and asked for Bullion, they were met by an attendant who had been carefully instructed beforehand.

"Mr. Bullion has been called out suddenly but he left word you were to be taken up to Sir John Magnet's room. He asked me to apologize for his absence, and to say he hoped to be back in ten minutes or a quarter of an hour."

Now Bullion had not the slightest intention of returning in ten minutes or a quarter of an hour. He had put Roger in Magnet's room, and set him to work writing an article with the kindly explanation that he would be quiet and undisturbed in the private retreat of the chief. He knew that when the Defensors were shown into the room Joan would recognize the "Mr. Grey" of the "Latian," and as she had already been told that the name "Grey" was a disguise she would be quick to draw deductions. So worked the agile brain of Bullion.

Mrs. Defensor and Joan, who had never met the financier, were pricked with expectancy as they were taken along the corridor to Magnet's room. Varying elucidations jumped to Joan's mind. Was it possible that Roger was in some way connected with Sir John Magnet. Bullion's associations with each gave a

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

reasonableness to the thought. The visitors were taken to the outer office in which the stenographers were at work, and one of the girls previously coached by Bullion took charge of them.

"I am to show you into Sir John Magnet's room," she said. "Mr. Bullion will be back shortly."

"She knocked at Magnet's door and, at a word from within, she opened it for the Defensors to enter.

"Mrs. and Miss Defensor," she said, and as the two women passed in she closed the door again.

Roger had met many emergencies in adventurous years, and he had maintained within himself the small vanity — not unjustified — that surprise was always a stranger to his face and manner. He had the hardest test that he had ever encountered when standing up from his desk to receive the unexpected callers, he saw the girl from the steamer and the lady he knew must be her mother. Explanations rushed upon him, as he welcomed them with a bow and a smile. He hazarded that he was discovered, that Bullion had tricked him, that at last these gentle detectives had run Roger Drew to earth. And the next second he was not so sure for he saw reflected in them, or at least he did in Joan, a measure of his own astonishment.

He shook her by the hand. "This is indeed a pleasure, Miss Defensor."

She smiled. "I don't know whether I ought to call you Mr. Grey," she said, "or to give you your proper name."

"I can't preserve the secret longer," said Roger, poised and ready.

## ROGER'S LIE

"I suppose I had better introduce you to my mother by your real name of Sir John Magnet."

Roger was graciousness itself.

"I'm entirely in your hands," he said, "and I trust both Mrs. Defensor and you will forgive the little deception. It was purely business and not romance that led me on to the steamer as 'Mr. Grey.'"

"No wonder Mr. Bullion and you were so friendly," said Joan. "I hope I did not commit myself with either of you about the other while we were on the ship."

"Discretion itself," said Roger. He turned to Mrs. Defensor.

"I am in possession of your mission, not only from my friend Bullion, but also from what your daughter told me when we were on the ocean."

"You knew my son?"

Roger's voice was low as he replied, "Yes, Mrs. Defensor. I was at the front for a short time, and now and again I met Lieutenant Defensor. Won't you please sit down both of you?"

"We aren't going to make any excuses for coming here. We have been anxious to find a special friend of Richard's, and are only glad to have met another."

"I hadn't the slightest thought that I was talking to Sir John Magnet on the steamer," said Joan.

"Forgive me for saying that I didn't want you to think that. Please dismiss any consideration of myself at all. Regard me if you will just as one of those who were fortunate enough to come in contact with Lieutenant Defensor."

"Did you know him well?" asked the elder lady.

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

“I think I knew him better than he thought, much better indeed than he knew me.”

“We had the most cheery letters from him out there,” said Mrs. Defensor. “But I was always afraid he was going through hard times about which he said nothing.”

“It was a hard life,” said Roger. “You would like me to tell you the plain truth? Your son had no easy time. I’m quite sure he minimized things. But I would like to pay my tribute to him. He was a capable soldier, although a little rash. He endeared himself to those around, because — the mark of the true man all the world over — he was considerate of those under him. I saw more than one instance of it.”

The mantle of deception had dropped from Roger. He was speaking the truth.

“He was reckless in danger, and perhaps this had something to do with his failure to get the promotion which I think he ought to have had. But any who possessed a feeling for the real qualities in a man could not have met your son, Mrs. Defensor, without knowing that, with a touch of youthful exuberance, he was a gallant English gentleman.”

The two women said nothing. Mrs. Defensor was moving a little unsteadily in her chair, and her hands were feeling blindly for the opening of the bag on her wrist. Joan was looking past Roger into space.

“You would like to hear that I never met any person, from the batman who attended to his personal wants up to his colonel who had not an appreciative word to say for your son.”

## ROGER'S LIE

"The colonel wrote me a nice letter," said Mrs. Defensor. She spoke with difficulty.

There was silence, and then Roger pulled himself together to break the tension. "I understand," he said boldly, "that you are looking for a friend of his called Drew."

Mrs. Defensor nodded her head and Joan said, "I think you told me you knew him, Sir John."

"Yes. Not a bad fellow but careless. He has wandered about in various parts of the world."

"We would like very much to meet him," said Mrs. Defensor. "He was with my son right at the end. He tried to save him."

"A lot of that kind of work done at the front. If it hadn't been Roger Drew it would have been one of your son's other friends."

While Mrs. Defensor listened with emotion which was only partly under check, Joan was watching Roger with an intenseness of which he became conscious. He suddenly had the idea that he was in deep waters with Joan, that he did not fathom her knowledge or thought.

"You never met Mr. Drew?" he said to her suddenly.

"No, and yet I fancy I can picture him."

"I am thinking I might help you," he said, directing his words to the mother as well as to the daughter. "By accident I've run against Drew within the last six months, and equally by accident I know he wished to keep himself away from what may be regarded as civilized circles. I'm wondering if —"

"Could you possibly reach him," asked Mrs. Defensor.

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

"I might," said Roger thoughtfully.

"You don't know how grateful we should be."

"You would be giving great happiness to my mother — and to myself," said Joan.

"I don't like to declare a man's secret," Roger paused, perplexed, and then as if he had suddenly made up his mind, he said, "I'm very busy for a day or two, and if you would be patient — if you would forgive me for just a little space, why I could turn my attention to it, and I think I might promise that within two weeks you should know his whereabouts."

"I can't tell you what we feel about it. We have waited so very long."

They rose to go. "It seems as if Mr. Bullion had been delayed," said Joan.

Roger smiled. "It wasn't altogether necessary for him to be here."

"Perhaps you will give him our very best thanks," said Mrs. Defensor.

"You must forgive him his reserve about myself," said Roger.

"Forgive! We are most thankful to him."

"I'll tell him."

As the two women reached the street, Joan said to her mother, "I'm a little bewildered. I can't understand this Sir John Magnet. I certainly have some recollection about him which is mysterious to me. I thought I had on the ship, but I put it down to imagination."

"He is a charming man," said her mother.

Curious little trills of speculation were running through Joan, and she had nothing but commonplaces

## ROGER'S LIE

for her mother's happy commentary on the drive back.

When they reached home Joan suggested to her mother that it would be courtesy to ask Sir John Magnet to the garden party which had been arranged for two weeks hence. The result of the suggestion was a message to the "Daily Spur" office, and a swift acceptance by the invited guest. Joan took the trouble to emphasize the trains by which he might travel out to Surrey, and insisted that he should make the entry in his date book.

"Mother doesn't mean to miss you," she said, "and she knows what you business men are."

Roger replied with assurance which left no doubt. There would not be any business which could interfere with his visit on that day.

After this was done Joan looked up Magnet's private residence in "Who's Who," and induced her mother to write him to that address a cordial little note asking him to the garden party. Joan was partly impelled by a somewhat vague memory of a portrait of Sir John Magnet when he got his knighthood. The portrait did not in the least resemble the man they had met in the "Daily Spur" office that afternoon.

## CHAPTER XVII

### ROGER AND THE HOME SECRETARY

**B**ULLION went through much perturbed talk with Russell the editor of the "Daily Spur," and incidentally a good deal of discussion with Roger about the manifestations of Magnet in Paris.

"Big and sudden changes are not unknown to us, but these are such violent contradictions. It isn't as if I hadn't heard his voice myself. I didn't understand why he fluctuated so quickly, but this facing about again within a few hours would drive a saint to despair. He has practically called us all liars, too. I sometimes wonder how long I'll be able to stand that kind of thing."

"Stick it, lad," said Roger. "It's only a passing phase."

Bullion pursed up his lips.

"I'm not so sure," he said. "There are some things one can't buy with money. There's going to be real trouble here when he comes back if he calls me a liar. Russell, too, Russell's not going to stand it. He's made up his mind, even if he's chucked into the street."

"When do you expect Magnet back?"

"Day after tomorrow I think. He altered his plans because of this upset. You had better keep clear of the office. He won't be a pleasant person."

## ROGER AND THE HOME SECRETARY

“I don’t know,” said Roger. “I’d rather like to see him. I see you have dropped all reference to the Home Secretary.”

“The only thing to do. Here we’ve been attacking him like the devil, and then we begin to praise him, and then Magnet sends us instructions to have a go at him again. Russell and I have agreed to keep any word about Curfew out of the paper till Magnet gets back.”

“What made Magnet attack him?”

“There is genuine objection to this Bill of his, but in addition Magnet simply hates the man. He’s a clever but self-important person this Curfew. I fancy some time ago he patronized Magnet or slighted him or did something of the kind. At any rate Magnet has leathered him good and plenty since he had the paper.”

“It would be interesting to know what Curfew thought of Magnet.”

Bullion grinned.

“Let’s keep off painful topics,” he said.

It was a few hours after this conversation, that Roger made his call on the Home Secretary. The ground was already prepared, thanks to the note paper from the “Daily Spur” office, a sheet of which had been used by Roger with some care and ingenuity in the formulation of a letter to Mr. Curfew. The legal consequences of his action did not worry Roger in the least, because his mind was already jumping towards a flight to foreign parts within the next week or two.

A complacent Home Office is not to be very much disturbed by change of front in a newspaper, but nevertheless the permanent officials recognized that the

## THE ESCAPE OF ROGER DREW

appreciation of the "Daily Spur," following a period of active criticism, was an indication of a return to sanity after a burst of sensationalism. No Government department likes newspapers; they are objectionable excrescences in a community; the community would be wise to trust its guidance absolutely to a well-bred and respectable civil service, possessing a sense of responsibility which never allows itself to pander to mere popularity, — as newspapers necessarily have to pander in order to live. Still, even the highest do not like to be slandered, and so the Home Office officials felt the change in the policy of the "Daily Spur" was a return to a proper attitude of respect for a State organization charged under Providence with the good of the country.

This attitude of mind was reflected in the words of Mr. Brownfellow, one of the leading permanent officials, to the Home Secretary when the latter came in at ten-thirty on the morning that the "Daily Spur" had made its right-about-face. The Right Honorable Sydenham Curfew was a man something over forty who had successfully mingled chancery law with politics. Judicial severity had marked him from his earliest years, and a harsh Roman nose, and a thin-lipped mouth were the external indications of a considerable capacity and high self-esteem. There was no nonsense about the Home Secretary, no soft shades, and nature had provided him with a sense of dignity in place of a sense of humor. Mr. Brownfellow met him by accident in the hall as he was entering, and accompanying him to his room, asked if he had seen the "Daily Spur." He spoke in the tone of one who refers to a regrettable prize fight, or a very low-class music hall performance.

## ROGER AND THE HOME SECRETARY

“No,” said the Home Secretary, “more abuse, I suppose?”

“They say they were misled about some of the facts, and indicate that we were right, after all.”

“It doesn’t matter.”

Mr. Curfew’s lofty indifference did not deceive his subordinate.

Mr. Brownfellow produced a copy of the paper from his pocket and handed it to the Home Secretary, folded with the leading article outwards. Mr. Curfew adjusted his eyeglasses, glanced at it and began to read it down, exactly as Mr. Brownfellow anticipated he would.

“H’m,” he said. “‘The action of other Government departments has forced the Home Office into a false position.’ Yes, that’s quite true, quite true. ‘Mr. Sydenham Curfew whom we have felt it our duty to criticize on public grounds, is a man whose probity, singleness of purpose and high intellectual attainments are recognized by opponents as well as by friends. We shall be the first to express our regrets if we have said anything in the past which conceals our high respect for him as a statesman who knows his own mind.’ Daresay they’ll change again, Brownfellow.”

Mr. Curfew was pleased but not appeased. The attacks in the past, ironic, humorous, bitter, were still in his mind, and he had full understanding that the picture of him which had been presented to the public would in large part remain. Besides he had a deep and genuine contempt for Magnet, which no apology, and no amends could ever entirely efface. That a cheap-jack—Mr. Curfew’s favorite appellation for the financier

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

— should secure a position in which without education, without responsibility he could influence public opinion, could vilify the great offices of State, could criticize institutions and procedures beyond his vulgar comprehension — this was a consummation which touched Mr. Curfew's strongest emotions. He was almost passionately sincere in his disgust. Whatever Magnet did now or in the future would make no difference. And yet, such are the weaknesses of human nature, even when concealed beneath the dignity of a Cabinet Minister, that Mr. Curfew turned to his work on this particular morning with a pleasing sense of conquest. The newspaper and its proprietor had found it impossible longer to combat him. Exactly what had happened to effect the change concerned him not. There was still a sense of propriety in the world, and statesmanship could still effect its objects despite popular outcries. It was with an analyzed self-content that Mr. Curfew turned to the work of the day.

Alas for his peace of mind, he was to undergo a new stern test even while the satisfaction of public virtue was warm within him. Though he knew it not, disturbance lay in wait for him among the pile of letters marked "personal" which flanked his left elbow. He did not encounter it for nearly half an hour, because the Chief Commissioner of Police was waiting to interview him about the muzzling of dogs in Kensington, and he had then to be further delayed, rather pleasingly this time, by a call from the Prime Minister's secretary with reference to the coming birthday honors. But presently a certain letter came to sight among his correspondence. Here it is:

## ROGER AND THE HOME SECRETARY

“Dear Sir,

Sir John Magnet on his departure for Paris yesterday asked me to write to you in reference to the prospect of your taking over the publication known as ‘Snappy Bits.’ I am to say that ‘Snappy Bits’ has been a profitable weekly journal in the past five years, and that during this period the profits have gone up in an increasing ratio from fifteen hundred pounds to eight thousand pounds a year. I shall be happy to lay before you at your convenience the full facts and figures. I am directed by Sir John Magnet to say that he is prepared to make concessions to a purchaser like yourself, and he will accept for the journal a sum of twelve thousand pounds. By Sir John’s direction I shall take the liberty of calling on you at an early date.

Yours sincerely,

George Grey

(Secretary).”

Having read the letter through, the Home Secretary looked at the address on it to make sure that it was meant for himself. He found there was no mistake. His feelings were not soothed when he took from the envelope a current copy of “Snappy Bits” thoughtfully enclosed by Roger. It was a halfpenny comic weekly consisting of four pages of more or less funny and vulgar drawings designed largely for the office-boy public, and four pages of letter-press which comprised exciting serials, including the “Faithful Reminiscences of the Assistant Hangman,” a running narrative from

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

an ex-official of how he had helped to put to death on the scaffold various malefactors of a preceding generation. That he, the Right Honorable Sydenham Curfew, one of His Majesty's principal secretaries of state, should desire to become the owner of this rag was so outlandish and preposterous a suggestion that he felt sure it could not have been put forward seriously.

He sent for Mr. Brownfellow and told him the situation. Mr. Brownfellow shrugged his shoulders.

"What?" rasped the Home Secretary. "Do you really think they thought I should buy or have anything to do with this gutter sheet?" He held up "Snappy Bits."

"I can't understand the letter," said Mr. Brownfellow in a puzzled way.

The Home Secretary read it through again. "Impudence!" he said.

"I suppose you haven't thought of dabbling in newspapers at all. You haven't spoken about purchasing a journal of any kind?"

The Home Secretary was almost vicious.

"I should be just about as likely to purchase a grocer's shop."

Mr. Brownfellow took off his spectacles and cleaned them with a silk handkerchief. "It's an interesting situation," he said.

"You don't suppose I've given this man Magnet, any encouragement?" The Home Secretary snorted.

Mr. Brownfellow said nothing, but he went downstairs, and in conversation with a colleague committed libel on his chief. "Curfew's got himself mixed up in business with Magnet," he said, "and now he wants to

## ROGER AND THE HOME SECRETARY

get out of the mess because Magnet has started to take advantage of it.”

Braced for his greatest effort, Roger at three o'clock in the afternoon walked into the big office in Whitehall and asked for Mr. Curfew. In place of a card he sent up a note on “Daily Spur” notepaper.

“The Secretary of State will see you.”

The tone of the attendant was respectful, now as always, to a visitor who had the entry to the great man. Roger went up the stairs in semi-serious mood; he was going to play the part of the non-committal business emissary, respectful but conciliatory and above all things grave and dignified. His silk hat and morning coat, his squared shoulders and slow stride took him clear out of the ranks of adventurers. A gleam of self congratulatory wonderment touched him as he went with the uniformed messenger to Curfew's room.

It has to be emphasized that Roger meant to be courteous to the Secretary of State. Annoyance to Magnet was his aim, and Curfew was but one of the instruments, and there was no reason to humiliate the Minister unnecessarily. He might have to suffer a little in a good cause, but no more than could be helped. Unfortunately for this benevolent impulse Roger possessed an impressionable temperament, the kind of spirit that always responded to a challenge, and directly he entered the room he felt the forbidding and insolent superiority of Mr. Sydenham Curfew, who sat facing a big mahogany table in an armchair. Roger's intentions were revolutionized. It has to be admitted that Mr. Curfew did not seem to know or to care what Roger's intentions were. He did not ask his visitor to

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

take a seat and he snapped at him before the attendant was outside the door, "You have come to explain this letter."

"I have come up for a business discussion."

Curfew stared at him with his rat-trap mouth shut tight.

Roger was smooth and persuasive.

"Your desire to have possession of this journal took Sir John Magnet somewhat by surprise."

"My desire to have this paper — "

Roger was not to be trampled on by the Minister's evident anger.

"He realized, however, that you had special reasons, and he wished me to say that he felt there was no need for you to apologize for your irregular method of approaching him."

"I have never approached him at all. What do you mean sir?"

Roger elevated his eyebrows, and there was a moment or two of silence. Roger watched with mild admiration how Mr. Curfew kept a hold on himself.

"Very strange," said Roger breaking the pause.

"Proceed," said the Minister grimly. "Let me hear if there is anything more."

"I am not in Sir John's confidence, and I do not know what means you employed to apprise him of your wishes, but I know enough to understand that Ministers can not always take direct steps in these matters. Affairs of state — "

"Is it suggested by Sir John Magnet that reasons of state would impel me to purchase this — this — "

He raised gingerly between his finger and thumb

## ROGER AND THE HOME SECRETARY

the copy of "Snappy Bits" which had arrived that morning.

"I am of course a member of the staff, but Sir John does not tell me about private matters of this kind. No doubt you will be able to settle the thing with him yourself. Personally I had an idea that you desired, 'Snappy Bits', for some official purpose. There is, for instance, a series of highly interesting revelations by the late assistant hangman — "

At this point Roger had to turn his glance away from the Minister whose eyes seemed ready to burst from their sockets in the intensity of his interest. Roger was becoming a little doubtful of his own powers of self control.

"It occurred to me," he went on, "that the hangman being under the Home Office, there might be some connection between these articles and your desire to have the paper. Just a passing thought."

"Do I gather you reflect Sir John Magnet's views?" Mr. Curfew spoke with an effort.

"Not with regard to these articles," said Roger. "I hope you won't think that. Perhaps I ought not to have made the remark."

"You certainly ought not."

"But, of course, hanging is technically one of your departments, and there are many things to learn — "

"You have a horrible mind, sir," said the Minister. "Perhaps we had better keep to the business in hand."

Roger apologized in the manner of a man who is abashed, and the Minister angrily brushed his words aside. "What I want to know," he said, "is why Sir

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

John Magnet has chosen to insult me by proffering me a gutter journal as if I had made advances for its purchase."

"I am quite unaware of what has passed between you and Sir John Magnet."

"Passed between us! What do you mean? Nothing has passed between us."

"If you say so there's an end of this matter. Sir John will be surprised."

"What do you mean?"

The rage of this dignitary at the suggestion of secrets between himself and Magnet was, Roger explained afterwards, the most impressive of all the sights he had witnessed through three continents. He replied confidentially. "Between ourselves," he said, "I notice that the 'Daily Spur' this morning was strongly in support of you in its leading article."

"I have not the slightest interest in the leading articles of the 'Daily Spur'. What I am trying to get at is the origin of this outrageous offer to me."

Roger shook his head. "Afraid I don't know. I certainly got the impression that you had communicated with Sir John Magnet. But now you say that is a mistake. Sir John is in Paris for a day or two, but he will be able to put the matter straight as soon as he comes back. If you will allow me to say so 'Snappy Bits' is a most excellent property. It might easily lead to other journalistic ventures in the hands of a man like yourself. I am bound to say that."

The Minister rose from his chair to bring the interview to a close. "When I desire to soil my hands with the gutter Press in any direction I will certainly

## ROGER AND THE HOME SECRETARY

communicate with Sir John Magnet. Will you please tell him so.”

Roger rose to the challenge at once. “Possibly the tone of ‘Snappy Bits’ is rather light for your purpose.”

Mr. Curfew scowled at Roger as the latter took up his hat and stick from the table, where he had laid them.

“Sir John is very desirous of serving you, even if it can not be done with ‘Snappy Bits.’”

Roger had his hands on the door now.

“If you don’t like ‘Snappy Bits’ you might have a look at ‘Loveknots’ our penny weekly paper for sweethearts.”

“Hell!” roared the Minister, now driven beyond endurance.

“I can make another suggestion, there is ‘Consoling Texts’ which is a high class Biblical weekly with a large circulation among Sunday Schools.”

Roger closed the door carefully and softly, and made his way down the wide stairs into the street. Exhilaration was on him. He felt he had done his duty.

“My first and last interview with Mr. Sydenham Curfew,” he said to himself. He was not to know that the Minister had some days before written an acceptance for the garden party of Mrs. Defensor.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### MAGNET COMES HOME

SIR JOHN MAGNET returned to London in a grimly humorous mood. The incongruities of the last forty-eight hours, annoying and exasperating, were really not serious ones, and he was pretty certain that fifteen minutes in the office would straighten them out. He would enjoy that fifteen minutes, he knew. Magnet's sense of humor never softened him where incapacity or muddle was concerned. He went down to the "Daily Spur" as a wolf descends on a sheep pen.

The building was hardly awake when he arrived at nine o'clock in the morning, and Magnet had a certain pleasure in being there well in advance of any of the principal members of his staff. This happened only once in a way; it was on these occasions that the editor and news editor, the secretary and other chiefs felt they had a grievance. Magnet found one of his stenographers at work, threw her a word of commendation, and took up the appointment book which lay by her side.

"I see that Mr. Bullion has arranged to see Mr. Carter of the Waterside Paper Mills at noon. Ring up and see if he is at his office yet, and say that if it's convenient I shall be glad if he can come here and see me at once."

Five minutes later the girl went in to Magnet in the room adjoining and told him Mr. Carter had not yet

## MAGNET COMES HOME

arrived in the office, but that the message would be given to him as soon as he came in. Magnet nodded and buried himself deep in the letters that lay before him on the desk. They were giving him fresh surprises and harassments. He made one or two rapid notes, and then, rising from his chair, walked up and down the room laden with thoughts and conjectures. Within ten minutes the stenographer announced the arrival of Mr. Carter. "He said I was to tell you he has brought his son with him, and he would like you to see him afterwards."

"Let him wait in your room. Send Mr. Carter in."

John Carter was a common-sense, practical man of fifty-five, whom Magnet liked, and who liked Magnet. The two were different and yet there were points of contact which established friendship.

"Glad to see you Carter. I'm in the midst of a frightful muddle. You can clear up one of them for me right away."

"What is it?" asked Carter.

"I saw you had an appointment here with Bullion for twelve o'clock, and when I looked over my letters I find a note from you making a reference to my so-called offer for the paper mills. You know as well as I do I haven't made any offer."

Carter whistled, and gazed steadily at his friend.

"I had a letter saying you were going to Paris, and then I had a telephone message from you agreeing to terms, subject to an adjustment of the directorate. After that I heard from Bullion who said you were returning sooner than you thought, and asked me to come and see him this morning."

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

“You can take it from me I did not telephone you at all, and consequently did not make you the offer you suggest.”

“With any one but you, Magnet, it would look like trying to slide out of an engagement. Of course there’s a mistake somewhere. I’m prepared to swear I heard your voice on the telephone.”

“Just what I expected in view of what’s been happening in this last few days. Somebody is playing tricks, Carter. I did not telephone you. I’ll get to the bottom of the thing today. Can you hurry up those accounts for me? Perhaps I’ll really make you the offer when I’m down to facts.”

“You ought to clear up this matter though. If somebody’s fooling you in one way he may be doing it in another.”

“Just what I suspect. Some persons are trying to be smart. I think they’ll regret it. And now Carter let’s get down to business about these mills of yours. Apart from the accountant’s statement I want to learn some other details.”

There was half an hour of the kind of conversation which Magnet liked, full of clear-cut facts, direct statements, an outline of possibilities, good and bad, and in general a faithful summing up of a somewhat speculative business.

“You’re the type of fellow I like to talk to,” said Magnet, as his friend rose to go.

Carter took up his hat.

“There’s that boy of mine.”

“I forgot you brought him round.”

## MAGNET COMES HOME

"I want to see if you can do anything for him. You said you would, you know, if it were possible."

"Did I? I've forgotten. Of course I will if I can."

"You remember I got on to the telephone to you later, about Hugh, and you spoke to him on the matter. Why hang it, I suppose that was bogus, too!"

"Afraid so." Magnet smiled. His indignation had been transferred to Carter.

"Hang it, man, you ought to protect yourself in some way. Naturally I'm not going to bother you with the boy now."

"Yes, you are," said Magnet. "I'll have him in. Let me have him alone to talk to for a little. If he's a chip of the old block I must certainly do something for him."

"It's real good of you, Magnet. I hate to bother in view of what's occurred."

"Nonsense. Show him in."

"By the way," said Carter as he turned towards the door. "Have you heard anything about this big new discovery in rubber?"

"Yes. I've been looking into it."

"Pretty big thing. I'd like to get on the ground floor if what they say is true about it."

"I'll mark you down for something if we pull it off."

"Is there any doubt?"

"Considerable doubt. We have the goods but the Americans are on the same line, and I'm not sure we are going to win out. I've been a little bit disturbed

## THE ESCAPE OF ROGER DREW

about it. Something took the wind from my sails the other day.”

“Aren’t you protected?”

“I’d rather not go into the matter now, but if I get the handling of the business I’ll see you are in on it, Carter. Now send that boy of yours in to me.”

Hugh Carter was a tall, fair haired, young man of twenty-one who had been to a big fashionable school, had spent a year or two in his father’s office, and developed, instead of an aptitude for business, an immature taste for journalism; it was romantic, it was fascinating, — and in all its phases so very different from the somewhat sordid and laborious round of concentrated office effort. Magnet knew the sort as soon as he set eyes on young Hugh.

“Come in Mr. Carter. Your father’s an old friend of mine. I’d like to do anything I can to help you. Go ahead and tell me about yourself.”

Magnet sat at his desk twiddling a pencil, and the visitor, with his hat nursed in his lap, was in an easy chair half a dozen feet away trying to feel at ease.

“The responsibilities you propose for me, Sir John, are rather heavy to start with, but I know others have done it, and I don’t see why I shouldn’t.”

“Responsibilities?” said Magnet.

“I have only composed some verses and written one or two articles up to the present. They say I can describe things very well. I edited our school magazine.”

Magnet shut his mouth tight, and flashed a quick, hard look at the young man. “We must have no misconceptions, Mr. Carter. In Fleet Street there are five

## MAGNET COMES HOME

hundred and fifty excellent descriptive writers; there are two real reporters; I have unfortunately neither of them on my staff."

"I'll do my best, but of course the editorial task you are going to give me is very heavy."

"All editorial parts are heavy. But we will see what you can do."

"I have, of course never edited an actual newspaper before."

"Eh?" said Magnet.

"It is certain to be a little strange for me at first. I daresay I shall soon pick it up."

"Pick up what?"

"The way to edit the 'Daily Spur'."

"Do I understand, Mr. Carter, that you are offering me your services as Editor of the 'Daily Spur'?"

"Yes, that's my intention," said Hugh Carter, with a spurt of boldness.

"You're a pretty good business man," said Magnet mildly. "You understand what it is to control a business with a turnover of about ten thousand pounds a week?"

"Up to the present I've only done a little writing, Sir John."

"You've certainly got ideas, Mr. Carter. I will write you on the matter. I must say good bye now."

Hugh Carter went out wondering whether he had got the position or not.

## CHAPTER XIX

### BULLION REVOLTS

**B**ULLION found his employer seated at his writing table with letters scattered all round him carrying on his face that calm preoccupation which so often signalled trouble ahead.

“Back again,” said Bullion in salutation. His mental outlook was not so pleasant as his tone implied.

“A frightful muddle you’ve made of things,” snapped Magnet.

Now Bullion had never been spoken to in this way before, being a highly capable and clear-headed young man who had been treated by Magnet with civility, and indeed with the kindness which his ability justified.

“A muddle?” he said.

Magnet banished the note of annoyance from his voice. “Yes, that’s what I said. I’d like the explanation. Why was I pursued to Paris by that man, Bolstrode? Why did the ‘Evening Argus’ suggest that I had offered to buy it? Who gave orders for that leader on the Home Secretary to be inserted in the paper yesterday morning?”

“Ah,” said Bullion. “I can tell you all those things.” He had begun to take off his overcoat, but now he fastened it up again.

“So far as I understand the situation,” said Magnet, “I seem to have offered a quarter of a million pounds for the ‘Daily Telegram,’ and one hundred and

## BULLION REVOLTS

fifty thousand for the 'Evening Argus', and to have gone suddenly mad in the direction of the Home Secretary. According to the 'Daily Spur' he becomes a Heaven-sent statesman."

"It's for you to offer an explanation," said Bullion.

"What?"

"I couldn't understand your action, from the moment you began giving the instructions. But that's your business. Why you should charge me with making a muddle of matters, I don't know."

Magnet straightened the wrinkles on his forehead, and looked at Bullion for a period of five seconds or so. "Do you suggest that I have offered big money for each of those two papers?"

"It's strange that they should both make the same mistake independently."

"It must have been in the same hour that I gave instructions for the new policy on the Home Secretary."

"It was," said Bullion.

"You're mad."

Bullion hardened. "If there's madness in question you sent some strange messages to Russell and me the other night."

"What the devil are you talking about?" he said.

"You gave definite instructions about altering the policy with regard to Curfew."

"Indeed? Anything else?"

"Yes, you offered Russell shares in the 'Daily Spur'."

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

“Offered him shares did I, offered shares in the business to a man so easily tripped?”

“I take the responsibility, the full responsibility. And it’s time for me to say I’m about sick of it. You can’t deceive me, I know your ways. You gave those orders, I heard you myself.”

“I suppose you’re making money out of this somehow.”

The color went from Bullion’s face. He spoke very steadily.

“You’ve been trying to trick these other newspaper proprietors, I suppose, and don’t like being found out. You are, at any rate, perfectly safe in deceiving your staff.”

Bullion’s spirit was at a great height. He leaned forward almost threateningly at Magnet.

“Leave the office,” said the financier.

“A master mind,” said Bullion. He had his hat in his hand.

Magnet touched a bell and a messenger came in. “Fetch a policeman,” he said.

“The police will be here sooner than you wish,” said Bullion. He went out with his head in the air.

Now that the excitement was over, Magnet found himself stirred by the rebelliousness of Bullion. It was hard to understand it. In other circumstances the sudden outburst of a capable fellow like Bullion would have convinced him. As it was he looked forward to the coming of Russell, and he had not long to wait.

The editor came in confident and in good spirits, and Magnet altered his method of reception.

“Anything to report, Russell?” he asked.

## BULLION REVOLTS

“Nothing much,” said Russell cheerily. “Everything is going all right. I have, however, to convey to you the thanks of the sub-editors for your generous promise to them the other night.”

“Have I been giving them a rise?” asked Magnet.

To this genial chaff, Russell responded, “It has bucked them all up wonderfully.”

“Has it? What do they think they got it for?”

“We’ve been having some good papers lately, and the fellows have been working pretty hard. I was going to suggest some little improvement here and there, though I don’t know that I should have recommended it for everyone.”

“So I went the whole hog, did I?”

“It was very good of you,” said Russell.

“What did I give them?” asked Magnet, blandly.

“Five percent increase?”

“Ten,” said Russell.

“Ah, I hope they’re satisfied.”

“They are very grateful indeed. They talked about a deputation today.”

“I’m glad they didn’t come. I’m not civil to deputations as a rule.”

“I have also to thank you for your message to me.”

“What was that?”

Russell looked at his employer with a little doubt, because he was keeping the joke up to an extraordinary length.

“You indicated that you were making some arrangements as to a directorship.”

Magnet played with his pencil for a few seconds

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

in thought, and then he said, "There have been some remarkable happenings here in the last few days, Russell, and I want to get to the bottom of them. Do you think Bullion is capable of a plot of any kind?"

Russell stared. "Bullion, of course not."

Magnet helped himself to a cigarette, and then he said, "You deserve a recognition of your services, and I shall probably give you a place on the Board, but I must ask you to believe me when I say that up to the present I have not indicated an intention of the kind to any living soul."

"But you telephoned — "

"I telephoned to no one."

"I was in the room. You spoke to me at the same time about the article on the Home Secretary."

"Tell me about it." Something like fierceness had crept into Magnet's tone. Carefully Russell explained the conversation between himself and Bullion on the one hand, and the person whom they assumed to be Magnet on the other, and Magnet listened attentively.

"I can assure you," he said, "that I did not speak either to you or Bullion on that occasion."

"You didn't speak at all?"

"Not a word."

"But your voice?"

"There's a clever comedian at work."

"It's all bogus, then, this message about the Home Secretary, the sub-editors' rise, and all of it?"

"Every syllable."

Russell whistled softly to himself. "The sub-editors have all been told of their rise," he said.

## BULLION REVOLTS

“The increase must stand. Look out they don’t know they have an unknown benefactor.”

“I can’t understand it,” said Russell.

“Somebody has personated me on the phone, taking you all in.”

“But why?”

“There’s money in it somewhere. No doubt a carefully planned business. I suppose nobody’s got at Bullion?”

“I’m perfectly certain Bullion is straight.”

“I don’t know. If you had heard his insulting remarks to me when I challenged him just now, you’d have had suspicions. It would have been worth some people’s while to give him big money to put up the thing.”

“Incredible,” said Russell.

“Well, now let’s see who there is who would have the boldness to do it, and for what reason they should try to disturb the office. We will take some of these newspaper people first.”

Then with a meticulousness which would have done credit to a Scotland Yard commanded by Sherlock Holmes they examined possible persons and possible methods. Presently they came to political considerations.

“The Government hates us like blazes,” said Russell. “We have attacked them all round, and latterly we have been very strong about the Home Office.”

“That Curfew person is not capable enough,” said Magnet.

“There might be somebody handling it for him.”

“I wonder.”

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

“Couldn’t we do something about it tonight in the paper?”

“That’s an idea, let’s work it out.” And so Magnet and Russell put their heads together to construct a statement which should spike the guns of the Government and expose the Home Secretary, and give them at the same time one of those sensational and unexpected announcements which provided the motive power of the “Daily Spur.”

This was the article as it was eventually formulated.

£ 1000 REWARD

“DAILY SPUR” AND A POLITICAL  
CONSPIRACY

JOURNALISTIC SENSATION

“As all the world knows the ‘Daily Spur’ has used the great power it possesses, independent of party politics, speaking its mind clearly and fearlessly on matters of public import. We have not hesitated to attack highly placed personages without regard to consequences. Over and over again it has been demonstrated that the people of the country are behind the ‘Daily Spur’ in its campaigns, and in view of this fact we have been able to disregard the hatred towards us of official circles, a hatred springing from ineptitude and incapacity. No one can doubt that the Government has been tottering to its fall through the action of the ‘Daily Spur’. We can not hope to be forgiven by those whom we are throwing from their pedestals. Unable by speeches in Parliament and on the platform to do us harm, prominent statesmen have for a long time been looking round to see a way in which they could permanently injure the ‘Daily Spur’. It is our painful duty to announce that within the last

## BULLION REVOLTS

few days a scheme to damage this paper has developed. While we of course exonerate responsible statesmen from any share in this scheme, at once so malicious and childish, it is conceivable that minor partisans moved by political animosity have been at work. We wish to unearth these plotters. For that purpose we offer a reward of £ 1,000 to the person or persons who can put us in possession of the facts with regard to the matter.

“A number of messages purporting to come from the proprietor of the ‘Daily Spur’ have been sent to distinguished business men and others with the intention of seriously committing this journal. False messages have been received at the office of the paper, and if their dishonest nature had not been detected they might have had very serious effect. There was it is true a certain infantile ingenuity about the messages which condemned them at once. The messages were designed to secure a change of policy in the paper. More damaging in their effects were communications sent to people outside the office committing the ‘Daily Spur’ to manifest absurdities, such as the purchase of newspapers of a different line of policy from our own. These instructions were sent over the telephone in a feigned voice. £ 1,000 will be given to the person or persons who can produce incontrovertible proof of the identity of the speaker.

“We invite the attention of the Home Office to this matter, for the Home Office is in a particularly good position to make enquiries. At the same time we may say for the benefit of the Home Office that we have no intention of ceasing to expose the inadequacy of the figure-head who is its nominal chief.”

“I think that gets there,” said Magnet.

## CHAPTER XX

### LETTERS OF NOTE

Leathwaite,  
Surrey, England,  
June 10th, 192—

Mr. Merton J. Connick,  
Connick & Brown,  
7056 Broadway,  
New York City,  
New York, U. S. A.

Dear Sir:—

My mother and I consulted you when we were in New York recently as to the whereabouts of a certain Captain Roger Drew, and it is possible in view of your prompt discoveries given to us just before we sailed for England that you imagined the matter was at an end so far as our interest was concerned. We should have made it clear to you that we desired your investigation to continue. There is still considerable doubt in our minds as to whether Captain Drew is in America or on this side of the water. We should be glad if you would take any steps that you consider necessary, and report to us at an early date.

We wish to direct your attention to the fact that Captain Drew was supposed to come to this country on a business project, and if I remember

## LETTERS OF NOTE

rightly, it was something to do with an invention in the rubber industry. We suggest that you will find in this a field for inquiry. If it should not be possible to put your finger on Captain Drew personally we should nevertheless be glad to have whatever facts may come to your notice in regard to those with whom he has been connected in New York in his business. We should like to know as definitely as may be who the people are, and what his arrangements with them were. Incidental details will be of interest and value to us. Will you please transmit a personal description of Captain Drew if you can procure it. Should you feel it necessary to come to Europe do not hesitate to let us know. In any case spare no reasonable expense in finding out all that you can. Cable us if you think it desirable.

Yours sincerely,  
Joan Defensor.

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7056 Broadway,  
New York City,  
New York, U. S. A.  
June 19, 192—

Miss Joan Defensor,  
Leathwaite Hall,  
Leathwaite,  
Surrey, England.

Dear Madam:—

On receipt of your letter I proceeded with the investigation with regard to Captain Roger Drew.

## THE ESCAPE OF ROGER DREW

I hope to have material information to give you by the next mail. I am enabled to state now that Captain Drew was to leave for England on behalf of the corporation known as "Fundamental Motorities, Ltd.", the chief of which is Mr. Arthur Dixon, a substantial and well-known business man of New York. I have not yet been able to ascertain if Captain Drew has already gone to England, but trust to be able to get to the bottom of the matter within a few days.

Yours sincerely,

Merton J. Connick.

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7056 Broadway,  
New York City,  
New York, U. S. A.  
June 21, 192—.

Dear Madam:—

Mr. Arthur Dixon the head of "Fundamental Motorities, Ltd." is a personal friend of Captain Roger Drew, and has a high opinion of him. He entrusted him with the British rights of a new and important discovery in regard to the manufacture of rubber used for automobile tires. Captain Drew is in England. I have not been able to ascertain by what ship he sailed. I trust to be in a position to send you further details shortly.

Captain Drew is a tall, dark, clean-shaven man with blue eyes. He is educated and well-mannered, with a deep voice.

Yours sincerely,

Merton J. Connick.

## LETTERS OF NOTE

Whitehall,  
New York City,  
June 21st, 192—

Mr. Arthur Dixon,  
Fundamental Motorities, Ltd.,  
Jackson Building,  
Nassau Street,  
New York City, N. Y.

Dear Sir:—

This is to bring to your notice the names of Mrs. Defensor and Miss Joan Defensor of England. They wish to approach you with some enquiries, and have cabled me to provide an introduction. Mrs. Defensor and her daughter have distinguished connections, and are held in high esteem. Any service you can render to them will be a gratification to,

Yours sincerely,

George Barrett.

(British Consul General in the United States)

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Leathwaite,  
Surrey, England,  
June 21st, 192—.

Mr. Arthur Dixon,  
Fundamental Motorities, Ltd.,  
Jackson Building,  
Nassau Street,  
New York City,  
New York, U. S. A.

Dear Mr. Dixon:—

I have asked the British Consul General in

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

New York to introduce to you the name of my mother and myself, and trust that he has acceded to our request. I am writing to you on a personal matter in which I hope you may have the power and inclination to help us. My brother Lieutenant Richard Defensor was killed in the war, and a very gallant attempt to save him was made by his friend Captain Roger Drew. Since the end of the war, Captain Drew has disappeared, and our efforts to find him have been unsuccessful. We feel under great obligation to Captain Drew, and, in addition to this, we have a keen desire to meet my dead brother's friend and would-be preserver. I gather that he is engaged on your business in Europe. My mother and I would be deeply obliged if you would send us an indication of his whereabouts, and if possible put us in touch with him.

Yours sincerely,

Joan Defensor.

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Jackson Building,  
Nassau Street,  
New York City,  
June 29, 192—.

Dear Miss Defensor:—

It will be a great pleasure to help your mother and you with regard to my friend Captain Roger Drew if I can. I know you will like me to be perfectly candid. I have a high personal regard for Captain Drew, and I am puzzled that he should have kept himself away from such good friends as your mother and yourself, and I really can not imagine

## LETTERS OF NOTE

what his reason is, though I am certain from what you say that he has some reason. I am convinced that it is his loss. I am sure he ought to know you. If he were just a business acquaintance I would not hesitate to send you immediately his address, but since, as I have told you, he is a friend I am a little hesitant to do it off-hand. Nevertheless I think I shall be able to fulfill your desires. I am sailing for Europe the day after tomorrow, arriving at Liverpool on July the eighth. I will come down to Surrey to see you on the next day. I trust this will be satisfactory. With best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Dixon.

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Leathwaite,  
Surrey,  
July 3, 192—.

Miss Agatha Brown,  
Burton Hall,  
Near Leicester.

My dear Agatha:—

I am glad you are coming to the garden-party here tomorrow because we are going to have Sir John Magnet whom you have always told me you were curious to meet. Can't you come and have lunch with us before-hand? We shall be expecting you.

Yours with love,

Joan.

# THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

## CABLEGRAM

N. Y. July 3.

Miss Joan Defensor,  
Leathwaite,  
Surrey,

Captain Roger Drew whom I described to you  
should be further recognizable by a slight limp due  
to a wound which he received in the war.

Merton J. Connick.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE GARDEN PARTY

WHEN Roger received a cable from Arthur Dixon announcing his early departure for England, he felt it a reproach, for there should have been no need for Dixon's journey. Not that he anticipated criticism. The generosity of Dixon in his methods was in itself an indictment, and Roger knew the American was coming over to save the face of the man in whom he had put so much trust. Roger writhed under it. There was, it is true, the consolation that Magnet would not have things all his own way, that keen brains would battle with him for mastery which at present the financier took for granted. But Roger felt the indignity, and his temper mounted with reflection.

Those who knew the suave and polished Roger Drew would hardly have recognized the man in an old dressing-gown, pipe in mouth, with tousled hair, striding up and down his room on the morning of the garden party to be given by the Defensors. Should he go? Even while he asked himself the question he knew that no consideration of personal profit or loss could keep him away. He was nearing the climax. Soon he must disappear from all this new circle, for in one purpose he was strongly set: no more favors from Dixon; the good-heartedness of his friend should not be further penalized. He had a lift of the heart as he remembered

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

that at the garden party he would see Joan Defensor, a young woman who had such unusual qualifications for friendship. He did not look beyond a talk with her, and he foresaw possible complications at Leathwaite, for it was a toss-up who would be among the guests; he might even have to face exposure. Bullion who had returned to Magnet's office, under the call of an apologetic appeal from his employer, suspected him. How could it be otherwise. Explosion could hardly be far away, and in his bitterness, Roger almost welcomed the prospect.

Leathwaite Hall at Leathwaite in Surrey was one of those pre-Elizabethian mansions constructed in the period when the great residences were being changed in form from fortresses to homes. It was of grey-red brick with a suggestion of Italian in some of the work on the gables and the variations round the eaves and above the doors. Inside was a pictorial spaciousness, rooms whose oaken roofs were higher than usually found in houses nearly five centuries old. It had a dining-room which would seat a hundred, and there had been preserved the gallery from which musicians used to lighten the heavier enjoyments of eating and drinking. Altogether Leathwaite Hall was a show-place, and the guests who had not visited the Defensors before had a pleasure which was increased by the affection and interest which Mrs. Defensor and Joan maintained in the old home. Joan especially had knowledge about the house and its history, and she always enjoyed herself with appreciative visitors.

She was telling about the room in which Queen Elizabeth slept on her famous visit to Leathwaite, when

## THE GARDEN PARTY

she saw Roger come into the room with two or three others and join the group of listeners. Watching and waiting for him during nearly an hour, she had been fulfilling her share of the afternoon's duties with a comprehensiveness which would leave her freer a little later to steal time with individual guests. In a few minutes the general conversation and movement steered her to Roger whom she greeted with conventional cordiality. She strolled with him through one of the long corridors, and then with happy thought, she took him by a side door to the terraced rose garden, which she said was a special pride of her mother. Joan had the important object of avoiding for as long a time as possible the introduction of Roger to other guests as Sir John Magnet. As they walked and talked amid the roses, she noticed his limp.

Roger and Joan were in the rose garden when Sir John Magnet who had come down by train from London entered the main gate and strolled up the tree-lined drive to the Hall. Immersed in the fascinations of money and business Sir John Magnet was no automaton, was not by any means the dried-up financier, and some of the finer things touched him although the world knew it not. He revelled in the July sunshine playing on this tableau of greenery and flowers. Half-way to the Hall, he debouched on the elastic turf and sauntered over to a cluster of flowering shrubs, the scent of which was responsible for a subtle impregnation fifty yards away. And as he stood before the bower of fragrant pink and white blossoms, conscious of an almost sensuous pleasure, he was by a sudden stroke brought back to the hard world of affairs.

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

Taking a short way to the Hall there emerged from a maze of hollyhocks, the silk-hatted figure of Mr. Sydenham Curfew the Home Secretary, and his course led him within a dozen yards of Magnet.

The financier, with sudden thoughts of the embarrassment which would arise from a first meeting in the presence of strangers, made a decision. He moved forward with a word of greeting.

"Mr. Curfew," he said.

"That is my name."

"I am Sir John Magnet. Forgive me but this seems an opportunity I ought not to miss. There is some misapprehension I wish to dispel if I can."

Mr. Curfew made an icy inclination of the head.

Magnet went straight to the point. "I gather from a letter you wrote me a few days ago that you are under the impression I have requested you to purchase one of my publications."

"Yes, I am under that impression."

"I desire to tell you it is entirely erroneous."

"I don't think it is a matter which we can discuss here."

Never was a man told more plainly in indirect language that he was a liar.

Magnet plunged ahead. "It's quite a mistake. Someone's been hoaxing both of us."

"That's mysterious," replied the Home Secretary. "I received a letter from your office definitely putting forward the proposal."

"No, no," said Magnet impatiently.

"It was a very business-like letter giving facts and figures about this extraordinary journal of yours."

## THE GARDEN PARTY

Magnet kept his temper in hand.

“Perhaps you will allow me to explain,” he said. “I was away from the office for a few days, and in my absence by some contrivance I was illegally personated.”

Mr. Curfew frowned.

“Very interesting.”

The patience of Magnet had its limits.

“I have offered the explanation due to you, and perhaps you will now tell me if there is any solution of the mystery to come from your side.”

“From me! Solution?”

“Certainly,” said Magnet. “I have been the victim of a plot, a plot which might easily have been devised to injure me and my business by those sympathetic to the Government which I have frequently attacked. Until I have got to the bottom of the business I cannot dismiss that possibility. I suppose that I may take it that no one associated with your office has instigated this little comedy by way of a reprisal.”

“The suggestion is stupid and insulting.”

The Home Secretary lost his gentlemanly repose for a moment. “You put forward this extraordinary suggestion to me, after you have had the impudence to send me a letter, and finally to convey through one of your personal emissaries reasons for my purchasing the paper.”

“Nonsense,” snapped Magnet.

“Came to my office,” said Mr. Curfew, “said there were articles in the paper about an ex-hangman, and thought I was interested in it because I was Home Secretary.”

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

“You’re mad.”

“Your representative even went so far as to point out the merits of ‘Stubbly Bits’ or whatever it is called, and also to recommend to me for purchase the paper which is published for sentimental domestic servants called ‘Lovebirds’ or something of that kind. He went further, and led on by an angry word from me, proffered in the shape of spiritual comfort one of your religious journals. Do you mean to say you know nothing about it?”

“You have a fervid imagination, Mr. Curfew.”

“Imagination,” said the dignified Home Secretary now becoming purple. “Why here’s the very man you sent to me.” He pointed along the lawn to Roger, who, having had to yield up Joan for a time, was sauntering along, admiring some of the flower-beds.

“That man?” said Magnet.

“Yes, and we’ll settle the matter now,” said the Home Secretary.

## CHAPTER XXII

### MASQUERADE

JOAN had chatted to Roger in a friendly familiar way about her brother, telling him of his boyish pranks, of his delight in country life and the queer tenderness not often found in an exuberant youth. Roger drank in Joan rather than the story of her brother, watched the lights in her eyes, luxuriated in the changing notes of her voice, observed her long narrow fingers as she pulled a standard rose forward to examine its beauty, noted her firm step, and the sudden swaying of her body under emphasis. And he was brought back to earth by the knowledge that she was guiding the conversation, keeping it away from any reference to the life of Sir John Magnet. He had a sudden shrinking feeling. And it was in this mood that Joan, summoned by a message from her mother, left him.

Roger walked off by himself through the grounds anxious to escape the guests. Undetermined as to his course of action, his offense in accepting, the invitation under another man's name came upon him. With an impatient shrug he realized that he was forgetting himself, and was thinking of the two women he had first evaded and then deceived. Joan suspected him and was protecting him — a tribute to her brother's friend, and Roger pringled all over with a sense of humiliation. His feet were on shifting sands.

## THE ESCAPE OF ROGER DREW

He was rapidly nearing a decision which would have led him unobtrusively out of the grounds to the railway station whence he could disappear into self-respecting effacement, and it was at this moment that walking through the flower beds he came within sight and hearing of Mr. Curfew and Sir John Magnet.

“Here you sir,” said Mr. Curfew, “your employer denies that you came to the Home Office to see me.”

Gone were Roger’s doubts. Back into the audacious plundering world of action he came with a bound. He approached the pair with polite wonderment on his face.

“Your call at my office the other day,” said the Home Secretary. “Here’s Sir John Magnet denies that you had any authority.”

“You are a stranger to me, sir,” said Roger complaisantly.

Magnet glared at him. “Explain the matter.”

“And I don’t remember to have had the pleasure of meeting you before either.”

Roger was all courteous attention, while he waited for the two men to introduce themselves. He was obviously curious, as was only to be expected from a person who had been so unexpectedly affronted. The irate Home Secretary wondered if he really had made a mistake; Magnet, on the other hand, was perfectly certain and did not hesitate to say so.

“Do you mean to deny that you are Roger Drew, and that you have been in my office repeatedly?”

“You really have the advantage of me. There must be some mistake.”

The sound of his voice brought confirmation to the

## MASQUERADE

mind of Mr. Curfew, and who, trusting Magnet not at all, began to suspect some new development of the trick.

“You certainly were at the Home Office,” he said.

“What office?” asked Roger.

“The Home Office in Whitehall.”

“I’ve heard of it,” said Roger, “but I really don’t believe I have ever seen it.”

“I’ve no doubt your employer will tell you where it is,” said the Home Secretary. He turned to Magnet. “Your representative seems to be following his instructions.”

“Instructions, sir. Do you mean to suggest that I sent this man, or any other man, about my papers?”

“I am content to let facts speak for themselves. You apparently recognize your messenger. I also recognize him. He denies knowledge of you and knowledge of me, no doubt with reasons, and a sense of propriety.”

“I don’t think we need to carry on this conversation any longer.”

“I am sure it must be embarrassing.”

“Really, this is all Dutch to me,” said Roger. “I daresay it has some meaning. Perhaps I had better let you two fight it out.”

He turned away. “Don’t go,” said Magnet. “I want a word with you. Later I shall be able to convince Mr. Curfew.”

“I hope so,” said the latter, as he walked on along the lawn towards the house.

“Now, Drew” said Magnet, “tell me what this indicates.”

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

It was Roger's turn to draw himself up stiffly.

"You persist, sir, in a very unpleasant mistake. I, like the gentleman who has just left, look for your explanation."

"Do you mean to tell me your name is not Drew?"

"I mean to tell you nothing after your very offensive tone. I can't think that Mrs. Defensor knows she has a person of your manners here."

"You mean to tell me —"

"I mean to say that it is very unusual for a guest on an occasion like this to seek out a stranger and insult him."

"This nonsense gives me the clue I've been looking for."

Roger looked at Magnet in astonishment. "My dear sir," he said, "why not go along and get something cooling to drink. Go out of the sun for a little and have a rest. Yes, really that's the best thing I can advise you to do."

"I shall prosecute you," said Magnet.

"So sorry I can't waste more time, but I have people waiting for me."

Roger was desperate now, for exposure might be a matter of minutes; it certainly could not be delayed longer than an hour. He had not thought to meet Magnet at Leathwaite Hall, and the presence of Curfew was a further surprise, a surprise which made the crash certain. Roger pressed his head back. He must see Joan Defensor, tell her the truth and fly. It was above all things important that he should meet her before Magnet or Curfew had the chance to talk with her or her mother.

## MASQUERADE

Roger had a piece of preliminary good fortune in observing Joan amid guests taking tea at the tables under the big oak trees, and he went across to her like an arrow. Joan, perceiving that he was on an errand, rose from her table and came a few steps to meet him.

"Miss Defensor, I have something to say to you, to say to you alone, I am going to presume far enough to ask if you will sit down at one of the unoccupied tables with me under the plea of a cup of tea. I sha'n't occupy you long."

"Certainly," said Joan. She was in a tremor though Roger did not suspect it.

They sat down together at a table out of hearing of the people Joan had left.

"Miss Defensor, if you knew a chance acquaintance like myself had deceived you and behaved discourteously and cruelly — "

Joan's fingers were trembling. Looking at him steadily, she said, "I shouldn't believe it of you."

"I am an adventurer."

Joan did not smile.

"I have had some such idea about you."

For a moment Roger was deflected.

"What qualities do you most admire in a man?"

"That's easily answered. Courage, kindness and a sense of humor."

Roger drummed his fingers on the table without looking at her. "What about honesty?"

"Oh, a man must be essentially honest. I don't think any man could be really brave, kind and humorous without being at heart honest."

"I don't know about that," said Roger.

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

Joan went on speaking. She was perfectly serious, and she seemed to have made up her mind for some occult reason that she must make herself quite clear, and that she must do it with as little delay as possible. Long afterwards Roger remembered.

“Why ask a woman what she most admires in a man. We can’t really name things. It’s just the personality that shines through him and out of him without his knowing it. When a woman once gets that unconscious message from a man it doesn’t matter what kind of labels other people put on his qualities or lack of them. Something within her has made the selection. She can never depart from it.”

Roger looked at her for a moment without speaking, and there rose within him the shape of his own hopeless self, and he said, “I don’t quite know how to tell you but I have to give you some painful information. I have come here today — ”

And then Roger stopped, for raising his eyes he saw Magnet and Curfew coming straight towards them. Each had been seeking Mrs. Defensor or Joan, and both had seen Roger with Joan at the tea table, and they had been approaching within a few steps of each other from the time the two sat down together. Joan rose with a gracious smile for Mr. Curfew, and they exchanged a cordial commonplace or two, while Magnet a yard or so behind waited his opportunity.

“I am going to take the freedom of an old friend,” said Curfew in an undertone, “and ask who is this guest of yours?”

Joan was having no confidences. She looked round at Roger, who had understood exactly what was being

## MASQUERADE

said, although he only caught a syllable or two. Reserve was thrown to the four winds. To haul down his flag in the presence of this contemptible Magnet and the pretentious bigwig, who oozed superiority at every gesture, was beyond him. He had no thought of it. He had half confessed to Joan, but he did not know how far her comprehension had gone, and she herself might very well in all innocence betray him. All was lost anyway, and in the presence of these two men who touched every antagonism within him, Roger had his back to the wall. There was a gentle light in his eyes as he stepped forward to prevent an immediate reply from Joan.

“I gather you wish to know me in view of the scene that occurred just now. I can spare Miss Defensor the introduction. I am Sir John Magnet.”

“What!”

Magnet himself had joined the group. It was not passion but pure astonishment which caused the exclamation.

Joan looked from one to the other, and like a wise woman held her tongue.

“You, Sir John Magnet?” said Curfew. “Why, you introduced yourself to me as Grey at the Home Office.”

“Won’t you tell me your own name?” said Roger. “We shall really then be able to get to the bottom of this matter. There seems some confusion.”

“You scoundrel!” said Magnet. “You came to my office — ”

“I wonder if somebody has been impersonating me?” said Roger. “I am certainly Sir John Magnet.

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

What is your explanation, sir, for addressing me as scoundrel? It is not language usually employed before ladies."

Magnet turned to Curfew. "This is intolerable," he said. "Mr. Curfew, we perhaps can discuss this when Miss Defensor is absent."

"First of all," said Roger, "it would be well to tell Miss Defensor who you are. I gather the other gentleman's name is Curfew. Is it possible that he can be the Right Honorable Sydenham Curfew?"

"I am Sir John Magnet," said Magnet turning to Joan. "I am sorry to have to introduce myself under such unpleasant circumstances."

"But I understood this was Sir John," said Joan pointing to Roger. "Can there be two of the same name?"

"It is fortunate that I was here in person," said Roger to Joan. "In my absence the fellow might have been successful."

His manner changed and he turned on Magnet almost ferociously. "What do you mean sir? What is your little game? I understand you do not know this man, Miss Defensor?"

Joan shook her head.

"I can clear part of this up but not all of it," interrupted Curfew. "Why this representative of Sir John Magnet should be taking on his name I do not know but it may be there is more in it than meets the eye. This is certainly Sir John Magnet." He indicated the real owner of the name.

"Working it together, are you?" said Roger. "Would you believe it, I found these two men not an

## MASQUERADE

hour ago deep in quarrel, fixing the business up I suppose."

"How dare you pretend not to know who I am?" said the Home Secretary.

"I really have been too busy guessing who your confederate is to trouble about you."

"Confederate?" said Curfew.

"Why surely," said Roger. "I daresay other people besides myself saw and heard you quarrelling together just now."

Curfew turned to Magnet, and the latter with a kind of savage composure said, "Well, we were quarrelling you know, Mr. Curfew."

"You might have been sir, I was not."

"Come," said Roger persistently, "why don't the two of you make a clean breast of it. The game is up. You can see that. Tell us all about it."

Curfew turned from Roger to the man whom he believed to be the principal agent in the complexity. "You are certainly Sir John Magnet. There's a good deal too much mystery about you and this business, and your servant, to make you an acceptable acquaintance. I will escort Miss Defensor to the house if she will allow me."

"Very well done indeed," commented Roger. "Now it only remains for this other person to become indignant and disappear and they are well out of it."

Poor Joan had withdrawn a little from the three men. She was praying no other guests would come within hearing. Roger looked across at her. "Are you on the telephone here? Can you get in touch with the

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

local police?" He frowned as though puzzled as to the proper line of action. And at this juncture Fate entered in the person of Bullion, who recognizing Magnet and Roger, had come across the grass fearful of he knew not what but quite prepared for drama.

Joan welcomed him with her eyes; she felt safer now.

Roger with the old boyish smile extended his hand. "Glad to see you, Bullion. You're just in time to say goodbye."

"Hello Roger." Then Bullion swung round with a word of salutation to his chief.

"We've got to the bottom of it," said Magnet grimly.

"Yes," said Roger, "rubber will soon be going up. I'll be packing my bag." He turned and bowed a good-bye to Joan without saying anything to her.

"This is outrageous," said the Home Secretary. "I suppose you know you have made yourself liable to the processes of the law?"

"But not to those of the hangman?" said Roger anxiously.

"You are an impudent fellow. I'm sure I speak on behalf of Mrs. Defensor and her daughter. In order to escape legal procedure, you must leave this place at once."

"Something in what you say," remarked Roger. "But I really don't like to go while my mind is in an unsettled state about one thing. I refer to the vital and pressing question of 'Snappy Bits' or 'Consoling Texts'."

## MASQUERADE

He twisted round and set off toward the park gates. Joan was already hurrying to the house. Her head was erect, her walk had a youthful spring; but her eyes were troubled.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### UNVEILINGS

**H**ALF an hour later Joan sought out Magnet and Bullion.

"I suppose I ought to apologize," she said with a light smile, "these things don't happen at a well regulated gathering."

"I am truly sorry you should have been imposed upon," said Magnet, who was not insensible to the charms of a lovely young woman. "I ought to make my apologies for coming here as a disturbing element."

"May we not try to forget it all for the afternoon?" said Joan. "I am anxious about my mother, and it would disturb her very much if she heard anything of the matter."

"That's easy," said Magnet rising to the difficulty. "You will be very careful, Miss Defensor, not to introduce me to your mother, — that is if she has already met the gentleman who condescended to personate my humble self."

"It seems a shame," said Joan, "but it's just lovely of you. I wonder if you will come here to dinner with us some time later after I have the opportunity of telling mother all about it."

"I shall be very pleased," said Magnet. "I'm sorry I have never met your mother and you before. I have frequently heard of you from friends. Mr.

## UNVEILINGS

Bullion here has had the advantage of me for a long time past.”

It was a trying afternoon for even such a resourceful young woman as Joan Defensor, but by devious ways she managed to guide events through the hours successfully.

Magnet did not stay very long, spent sufficient time talking to acquaintances here and there, and then, happy to get away from an unnatural situation, went off quietly without the formality of good bye. Sydenham Curfew, unknown to himself, was carefully looked after and found no chance for speaking alone with Mrs .Defensor.

Joan knew it was only postponing the evil day but the respite eased her spirit, if only for the reason that she had much to discover, and many things to do, before she or her mother should next come in contact with Magnet or Curfew. Bullion was left after the other two men had gone, and Joan with a deep breath of easiness sought him out for consultation.

“What does it all mean, Mr. Bullion?” she said. “I had a suspicion already that your friend was Roger Drew, but what about all these disguises? And why did Captain Drew refuse to come to see us, and tell us who he was?”

“Drew is a peculiar fellow,” said Bullion. “I feel like a traitor, I was not thinking about him at all this afternoon, and his name slipped from me unguardedly. Did I really give him away?”

“It didn’t matter,” said Joan. “The secret was out. It seems your friend went to Mr. Curfew as the

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

representative of Sir John Magnet to make trouble between them."

"Yes, I heard all about it from Sir John. He's at the bottom of a lot of mischief recently. Poor old Roger."

"But why did he do it? There must have been some reason."

"I fancy he had a grievance against Sir John, what he considered a very great grievance. It was his way of getting level. You won't think much of him, Miss Defensor in spite of what he did for your brother. But I have a great affection for him. He is a remarkable man, really."

"What is going to happen now?"

"Nothing probably. He'll just go away. We have all seen the last of Roger Drew for a long time. I know Roger."

"Go away?" said Joan.

"I'll guarantee that at this moment he is at his hotel packing his traps, that he is leaving either tonight or tomorrow morning at the latest, and tomorrow evening will be on the water going westward, or southward, or eastward, Heavens knows where."

"But he can be stopped," said Joan.

"Stopped? You wouldn't bother him for this affair would you? I tell you frankly, Miss Defensor, all my sympathies are with Roger. You know what he meant to your brother. This is just an escapade. Surely you won't think it necessary to give him further trouble?"

"Trouble — no, I wasn't thinking of that, I must

## UNVEILINGS

talk to my mother. We must do something. We have looked for him for so long.”

They passed to other topics, and Bullion admitted to intimacy he had not experienced before, set out on unknown channels. He had never seen Joan dressed in white, and this black haired girl in her white dress with her shining sympathetic eyes transformed him. Her manner helped. Bullion was certainly no more assuming than any successful virile young man ought to be, had indeed, more than his share of modesty, and yet he could not but be influenced by those understanding eyes and the frequent inviting phrase. Joan's words made him feel warm at his constant friendship with Roger, the help he had given him, and Bullion realized that the invasion of Roger Drew was proving a great event for himself. And in these circumstances is it to be wondered at that Roger Drew paled away, became, even while Bullion was talking, something external, an influence which had served its purpose, possibly the purpose of Destiny. In the glow of the summer afternoon, with the radiancy of Joan as she sat facing him with her heart in her eyes, Bullion's spirit rose within him to make the great attempt.

Joan was feeling comfort in the presence of the staunch Bullion, his naturalness in the face of difficulties, his common sense strength, his genuine friendship. She had never felt so interested in him before and she realized that she had not previously understood his qualities. That cleanly cut jaw, that well-formed aquiline nose, and the crystal clearness of his thoughts gave her courage and repose. In her agitation she rested on him. And she was not to know that in the

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

bloom of her youth and eagerness she was asking for new relationships.

"I feel that Sir John Magnet and you have been very kind in this troublesome thing this afternoon," said Joan.

"Sir John has a kindly streak in him. I was glad he was so courteous. He generally is, in any real difficulty."

"And you have been kind, too. I haven't had the opportunity, Mr. Bullion, to tell you how much my mother and I have appreciated your sympathetic help recently. We want you to come to see us more frequently."

"I don't know whether I ought to, or not." Bullion did not look straight at Joan; and he generally looked straight at people when he talked to them. There was a curious little inflection in his voice.

"You mean your work is very engrossing just now. I know how busy you are."

"Not so busy as all that."

"Then come up and see us when you can. Don't let any ceremony stand in the way. This isn't a general invitation; it really means that my mother and I will be glad to see you any afternoon or evening that you can come and talk to us. My mother asks about you frequently. She doesn't forget your help about Captain Drew."

Bullion was looking directly at Joan now, but she wondered from the look in his eyes if he were giving attention to her words, and she felt a queer little nervousness about him.

"You need give me no thanks for anything I can

## UNVEILINGS

do for you, Miss Defensor. I just can't help feeling happy when I do something that pleases you."

"I didn't know Americans were such courtiers."

Bullion brushed aside the evasion. "I am no courtier. I have sometimes wished I was more of one. I'm afraid I'm a very unornamental man without many attractions."

"Is this the season for deep sea fishing, Mr. Bullion?"

Bullion talked on as if he had not heard. He was transfigured. The garden party, Roger Drew, Magnet, business, his ambitions, were insignificant trifles. He was on a new plane, and the universe past, present, and future was in the shining eyes of this tall girl in white who sat opposite to him.

"I suppose I'm just silly but I've got to tell you. From the first time I saw you nearly a year ago I had new strange feelings. If I never saw you again after this afternoon you have brought a great deal of happiness into my life because I have had secret hours of joy just in thinking of you. I suppose that sounds rather school-boyish, I can't help it; it's the truth. My other interests have been drab. I wonder if you have the same effect on all men? That's a horrible thought to me, but I suppose it's true. You spoke of my doing you some slight service. You took me to some other beautiful world by letting me do anything for you."

Joan rose from her seat, with her breath coming quickly, and Bullion saw that he had changed restfulness into tumult. The capable Joan was forced into whirlpools wherein she struggled hopelessly.

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

“Oh, no, no,” she cried. “I wish you hadn’t said that. I’m so disturbed today.”

Bullion had risen too. “I’m sorry I upset you,” he said. But though his words were measured there was exaltation in his heart. “Let me take you indoors.”

“Let me go alone,” said Joan pleadingly, “I can’t stand it just now.”

Bullion went to London with fairy lightness in the air, and music all around. He found to his delight that Roger was still at the St. Claire Hotel, and in a kind of happy brokenness, told him how he had hope, rich hope. The future was his, he felt it.

The gentle serious look in Roger’s eyes was that which always warmed men’s hearts toward him. He put his hand on his friend’s shoulder. “I can wish her no greater joy,” he said — “and as for you, you deserve all the happiness that is coming.”

## CHAPTER XXIV

### MAGNET SURPRISES ROGER

**I**T WAS noon next day when Bullion called up Leathwaite on the telephone and spoke with Joan. "Your mother knows about Roger Drew now, I suppose?"

"Yes, I told her late last night, and I'm afraid as a result she did not have much sleep. Do you know if Captain Drew is still in London?"

"You needn't worry. He's going away to Brighton this evening, and is returning to London in four days' time to meet Mr. Arthur Dixon, his American friend, who is on the way from New York."

"I knew Mr. Dixon was coming. I was hoping that Captain Drew would be held by him. Will it be certain that we can see him?"

"I think we can make it certain. There have been developments here in the office. You will be surprised to hear that Captain Drew will be calling this afternoon to fill an appointment with Sir John Magnet."

"With Sir John Magnet!"

"Yes, Sir John and I had a long talk this morning. He has telephoned to Captain Drew and made the engagement with him."

"I'm frightfully curious about it, Mr. Bullion. It's all very weird. What does Sir John Magnet want him for? Can't you persuade him to come to see us instead of going to Brighton?"

## THE ESCAPE OF ROGER DREW

“Better wait till Mr. Dixon gets here. It’s a mixed up business. Wouldn’t it be nicer for you to hear from Captain Drew himself a little later on?”

“Splendid, but I don’t know how my mother will get through the next few days.”

“You and your mother will like to know Drew’s address. He is stopping at the Hotel St. Claire, Charing Cross.”

The promptness of the telephone operator prevented Bullion from getting Joan’s word of thanks, but he nevertheless hung up the receiver with a feeling of contentment.

That afternoon Roger went to Magnet’s office in the City with no very clear idea of the reason for an urgent business invitation, but certain that his duty lay in seeing Magnet, in acquiring whatever information was available for Dixon. Towards Magnet personally he was reckless. Some of Roger’s rancour had left him in view of his successful innovations. He had, he hoped, cost Magnet money; he knew he had annoyed him; and he trusted he had set loose currents which might continue for some time to cause difficulties. His task was nearly over. He anticipated no embarrassment from the interview, for a certain brazenness came naturally to him in the presence of the calculating, audacious Magnet. He surmised that Magnet might have used the bait of business to secure his presence for retaliation, or at least for threats. If such should prove to be the development of the afternoon, he would enjoy his call; he indulged himself in a steely little chuckle.

When Roger was shown in to Sir John Magnet, he

## MAGNET SURPRISES ROGER

was on his guard, prepared to shape his manner to suit the occasion. Magnet came forward with a kind of calm, business-like friendliness, and shook hands with him without hesitation. "Sit down Captain Drew. You little expected me to ask you to call."

"I try always to be prepared for the worst," said Roger.

"That won't do for me. Here, have a cigarette. You know, I have come to the conclusion that you are a capable young man."

"That's nice of you. Flattery from a successful person like yourself, Sir John, is a compliment however pointless the suggestion may be. Believe me, I have no hallucinations."

Magnet looked at Roger as though measuring him.

"A very remarkable young man, too, in some ways. Would you like to know what has made me rich, Captain Drew?"

"Don't reveal the secrets of the prison house. I am untrustworthy."

"You still regard me as an enemy. But I'm interested in you in spite of yourself. I'm gong to tell you what has made me rich. People put it down to luck, and I've had some luck. Others say shrewdness, and I have an ordinary share of business brains. Some say I have done it because I am a rascal; well I daresay I am no saint."

Roger notwithstanding his antagonism began to feel that he had missed something in Magnet.

"The fundamental secret which accounts for anything I've done for myself is to be found in the one word courage."

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

“Yes, you have that,” said Roger.

“I haven’t been afraid of what people thought about me. The copy books urge fearlessness towards one’s enemies. I have never been afraid of my friends.”

“That’s true,” said Roger dryly.

“I know what you are thinking, and it doesn’t trouble me in the least. All I have meant to convey to you is that a deliberate boldness — which is quite temperamental — means everything if it once gets into the right channels of effort. You will probably disbelieve me when I say that I have no personal end to serve in speaking appreciative words to you. Well, it’s a fact. Most men have no more initiative than sheep, a considerable number are as inanimate as cabbages. I build on that. Nearly all the interesting people I have met in my life have been my enemies.”

“The tribute overwhelms me,” said Roger.

“I thought it might. I want to congratulate you. You have pinched me here and there, but you have nearly recompensed me for everything by your treatment of Mr. Curfew.”

“Did I make a false move?” said Roger. “I’m always blundering.”

“I’d like to know more about that interview of yours with him.”

A glitter of fun came into Roger’s eyes.

“It was his own fault. When I went to the Home Office, he spoke to me as if I were a footman, and that did it.”

“Capital,” said Magnet.

## MAGNET SURPRISES ROGER

“He seemed to think you were pushing the paper down his throat,” said Roger.

“The fool.”

“He imagined that the change in the policy of the ‘Daily Spur’ as evidenced by a leading article that morning was the lure, that you were prepared to secure his money by that means, in other words, that you were exercising blackmail.”

“You certainly are a clever devil,” said Magnet.

“I was never so proud of my self-control.”

“You offered him ‘Consoling Texts’.”

“Yes that was after he swore at me.”

Magnet surrounded himself with cigarette smoke. “I can really forgive you everything. Now Captain Drew, what do you think I invited you here for this morning?”

“As far as I can see there is only one thing.”

“Indeed, and what’s your idea?”

Roger drew from his inside pocket a folded copy of the “Daily Spur”, and opening it carefully to the middle page, he handed it across to Magnet.

“I’m prepared to fulfill the conditions of your offer. Indeed I have practically done so already. A thousand pounds is not very much, but it would be of considerable service to me at present. I don’t see that anybody but myself could possibly have secured the reward. Looked at in some lights I am doing you a favor by revealing what you want to know.”

Magnet laid down the paper, and gazed at Roger steadily. “Why ever didn’t you go on the stage, Captain Drew?”

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

“Business is business,” said Roger. “I can do with that thousand pounds.”

“Cheap at the price,” said Magnet, “but nevertheless I am going to postpone payment.”

“I’m hardly surprised. This is the second time you have defaulted with me.”

“And what was the first?”

“The thing I shall never forget,” said Roger, “is that you probably did not see you were doing anything discreditable.”

Roger’s air was that of a philosopher.

“I would like a plain answer to a plain question,” said Magnet. “How did I break faith with you?”

Roger maintained his mildness of expression, but with an increasing curiosity in the man before him.

“I don’t mind recapitulating,” he said. “You heard of the profitable discovery which I was entrusted to sell, you found out all you could about it from me, you played the cordial friend, you set your spies to work. Then having a grip on the new invention you cast me off like a worn-out coat. But how stupid to have to repeat these things.”

“So that’s what you think?” said Magnet. He sat and smoked in silence, and Roger lighted another cigarette, leaned back in his chair and surveyed the man who had ruined him.

“My purpose in asking you here today,” said Magnet, “is to tell you that I have been in communication with your friend, Mr. Arthur Dixon, and that we have arranged to meet together as soon as possible after he arrives in this country.

Roger gave no evidence of his amazement in his

## MAGNET SURPRISES ROGER

silent contemplative stare, and then he rose and took up his hat and stick. "You have given me remarkable news, Sir John. I tell you straight that I'm happy to think that my friend Mr. Dixon is going to deal with you at close quarters."

"I shall be glad to meet him," said Magnet. "He has a good reputation on the other side."

## CHAPTER XXV

### DIXON TAKES A HAND

**R**OGER keen for his friend's arrival came back from an invigorating three days at Brighton to await the telegram which was to tell him his friend had reached Liverpool, for he was eager to clear up matters. When the message came from Dixon its purport gave Roger both perplexity and disappointment.

“Arrived well and fit. Have to visit personal friends, but will see you in two days from now.”

At kindling point to see Dixon, Roger swore at the forty-eight hours delay, and marvelled that the American should be able to defer for so long an enquiry into the devastating muddle of business which had brought him over. However prosperous Arthur Dixon was, and however wide his interests, he could not be indifferent to the large amount of money involved in the rubber invention, and it might be that every single day's delay meant further loss. Dixon's temperament generally made him go straight to the heart of a difficulty, and Roger tramped up and down his room impatiently, puzzled, and almost angry. He was to learn more than he yet knew of his friend's capacity for action.

Six hours after Roger received the telegram, Arthur Dixon arrived in London at Euston, and took a taxi to Cunliffe's, the fashionable hotel in Grosvenor

## DIXON TAKES A HAND

Street. From there he dispatched two telegrams, one to Joan Defensor, to the effect that he would be at Leathwaite at ten-thirty the next morning, and the other to Magnet with the information that he would be at the financier's office at four o'clock in the afternoon. Whatever his deficiencies Arthur Dixon was not the man to let the grass grow under his feet.

Next morning he went from the West End over to Waterloo Station and took a train for Leathwaite. The hour's journey gave him time for some reflections. Dixon, though he had learned little on the personal side about Mrs. Defensor and Joan, had nevertheless furnished himself with an outline about them. He was bent on helping Roger, who he perceived had suffered from foolish pride, and from disinclination or inability to take advantage of a singular opportunity. Dixon had a mental picture of a fragile aged lady and an angular middle-aged daughter, who were looking for an emotional object on which to expend some of their surplus wealth. He knew they were rich. He did not expect that by forcing Roger into their orbit there would be a sudden transference of cash, but his experience told him that these two women must have large interests in industrial enterprises, must for that reason, if for no other, have influence which could be turned to big account by the enterprise, brains, and personality of a man like Roger Drew. Dixon knew that his purpose was legitimate, more than that, was laudable; he felt he could bring not only satisfaction to the two women but welfare to his friend. He thought out his lines of approach as he pictured Mrs. Defensor and her daughter. He had already a feeling of

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

kindliness for them, something of pity too. He knew the type. Divorced from the full rich life of youth, enveloped with wealth, they needed an interest — and an interest he was going to give them. He experienced the happy glow which comes to a philanthropist who is bestowing his benevolence in well-directed courses.

In this mood Dixon walked from the village station to Leathwaite Hall. His mission grew a little less important as he relaxed in admiration of the same soft green beauty which had stirred Magnet a few days before, and paused to take in the great oaks beneath which, unknown to him, Roger had made his final stand before Magnet and Curfew. But Dixon was himself again ten minutes later, when he was shown into the library of the Hall to await Joan. She came sailing in a picture of summeriness in blue and white. Dixon had some of his preconceptions suddenly blown to atoms.

“It was good of you to come Mr. Dixon.”

“A real pleasure.”

“I suppose you wondered what kind of a forward English miss you were going to meet.”

“I admired your initiative, Miss Defensor. I was glad to get your letter. One of my reasons for coming to this country was to help you.”

In the course of the next five minutes Dixon found himself possessed of a new interest in his undertaking. He had, as one of his unclassified assets, a swift intuition about individuals, sudden strange likes, and dislikes, and though he said little, Joan felt the sympathy coming out of him. Very soon she was deep in her story, telling it with naturalness and simplicity. A

## DIXON TAKES A HAND

matter-of-fact query or two from Dixon drew out some details. He told some of Roger's life in America, described the business which had sent him over to England, and presently said, "I have a regard for Roger. I would like to say this, and I know it will give your mother and yourself a good deal of pleasure, when you get to know Roger Drew you will find him a chivalrous kind-hearted man, and one who only requires the proper surroundings, and a big motive to lead him to success. From what you say I guess you sometimes wondered between you whether you would be disappointed in him. You won't be disappointed. You can be proud that your brother had such a friend."

A smile lit up the square face of the American.

"I don't throw compliments around for nothing, Miss Defensor."

"I can only say Mr. Dixon that you have brought my mother and me much contentment and pleasure."

"You're not through yet," said Dixon. "He's an erratic soul. I can hold him for a day or two, but I don't know what's going to happen then. I shall look for your co-operation. You two ladies want to get a grip of this fellow and talk to him for the good of his soul. Isn't that the position?"

"I don't know that I would quite put it that way, but we want to know Captain Drew as a friend, and to show him that we are friends. And unless he then desires to run away from us we would like to continue to know him."

"The first thing is that he should not escape, and that you and your mother see him under circumstances

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

of a less exciting nature than were possible here the other day. Are you going to be staying down here for a little?"

"For at least a month," said Joan.

"And I can get in touch with you any time by telephone or telegram?"

"Yes, and I'll do anything you wish."

"Well you just leave it to me for the present and I'll try to shape things."

"I know I can trust you," said Joan.

"You surely can," said Dixon.

He stayed to lunch with Joan and her mother, and under their homelike hospitality and unpretentiousness wondered if he was doing the right thing in omitting any reference to the other side of Roger, his love of a game of poker, his fondness for good wine, his lightness with women. He stiffened himself as he remembered the struggle of his friend. He was there to uphold Roger's stock, not to lower it. And he unbent into the agreeable occupation of making himself pleasant with pleasant people. The two women enjoyed him much, the occasional commanding softness in his hard blue eyes, the witty word and gesture. Dixon always gave automatic comfort to friends in times of difficulty by a sense of foursquare capability and good humour. He radiated cheerful strength.

"I suppose you regard me as a kind of good fairy?" he said to Mrs. Defensor.

"I was thinking exactly that."

"Some would say a change of part for the American business man," said Joan.

"And they would be quite right," replied Dixon.

## DIXON TAKES A HAND

“I am just luxuriating in your good opinion. They wouldn’t know me in Broadway.”

“And can the leopard thus change his spots?” asked Mrs. Defensor.

“Now listen, Mrs. Defensor. I’m about as hard a specimen of successful business as you can find.”

“Forgive me, I don’t believe it.”

“In this hard old world of ours a benevolent business man is a contradiction in terms. We put on angel’s wings for a holiday,” Dixon chuckled. “I love to hear you say what a nice man I am. You make me think there might be something in it. I suppose there is, when I feel good like I do today.”

“I’m in the mood, to disbelieve some of these genial cynicisms,” said Joan.

“I am profoundly thankful that you are never likely to get the opinions expressed about me by Johnstons the coal people, by the Frick Brothers who manufacture candy, or by the Southern Nut-Growers Association. As the result of varying deals I’ve been called ‘trickster’, ‘tyrant’, ‘gumshoe Arthur’, and ‘brass nails.’ There were some other words which I haven’t got the courage to repeat. Possibly I deserve all that is said. My consolation is that the other people would have treated me just as harshly as I treated them if they had had the chance.”

“What a curious life,” said Joan.

“I ease up a bit sometimes when I find a person I like.”

“Penance,” smiled Mrs. Defensor.

“No, Mrs. Defensor, self-indulgence. It pleases me. I like Roger Drew.”

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

“You must meet some of our business men,” said Mrs. Defensor. “There is Mr. Bullion.”

“Yes,” said Joan. “You ought to meet Mr. Bullion.”

“A regular fellow I’ve heard. He’s been pretty good to Roger.”

“We have a great respect for him,” said Mrs. Defensor. “We’ll have you here together one day.”

“Fine. I’ll get an opportunity to meet them both separately first. I’ll see Roger tonight.”

Dixon went on to tell them something of his plans, his projected visit to Magnet, and what he hoped might result from it. Joan’s eyes glistened, and Mrs. Defensor clapped her hands together and said, “That would be lovely. I do hope you’re successful.”

Dixon left under a pressing invitation for a return visit, and Joan said, “You don’t know how anxious we shall be to hear from you.”

When he had gone Mrs. Defensor turned to Joan. “I didn’t think I’d ever like the American accent so much.”

Dixon strode off down the drive towards the station still in the gentle atmosphere behind him, while his mind ranged back over the years. Money-making Dixon, whose assiduity in the great pursuit was a by-word among his associates, was thinking back a decade, thinking of a little home on the north side of Long Island, where a dainty young woman had made life golden for him. She was scarcely more than a girl when the fatal illness came. The Defensors somehow brought her back to him. He pinched his lips together.

## DIXON TAKES A HAND

Five years of perfect happiness! After all it was more than most men get, and a great deal more than most men deserve. Dixon put his mind on to the business of the day.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### DIXON WORKS FAST

DIXON went to Magnet's office that afternoon with very different feelings from those which had possessed Roger on his first visit. This was no adventure for the American; the London financier was not unexplored territory to be approached with hopes and fears. Dixon was on solid ground.

"It was very good of you to come and see me," said Magnet with a cordial handshake.

"The pleasure is mine," said Dixon, "I had to make the journey on a personal matter, and it seemed well that we should have a talk after your letters to me."

"I fear I was the cause of some misunderstanding on the part of Captain Drew whom you sent over."

"I've heard something of it. Partly my fault, Sir John, partly yours, too, perhaps."

"No doubt about that. We can soon clear up matters now you are here."

"You seem to have got busy when you heard from Drew that we had the draw on you."

"Naturally enough. Here had we been slaving away at this thing in Scotland for a year or more, and then we hear that you have beaten us. I wired over at once to set people at work to find out whether you were on the same lines as ourselves."

"And to find out anything else." Dixon grinned.

## DIXON WORKS FAST

“You caused one man to be booted out in double quick time from our Newark place. Another was nearly put into a tub of water.”

“Martyrs to science—and business,” said Magnet. Dixon laughed heartily.

“I think we shall get on very well together, Sir John.”

He took some papers from his pocket. “Now as to the situation, I gather you came in close on our heels.”

“We knew the secret about a week after Drew arrived. There was just the one thing missing. We found it.”

“I’m not going to ask you whether you got it from Newark.”

“It’s quite certain you would not believe me if I said we made the genuine discovery in our Scottish factory. Let it pass. We had it.”

“And then the disappointment.”

“I put it to you, Mr. Dixon, as a business man; here had we spent thousands of pounds, and months of work, in these experiments; we learn that an American firm is successful, and we too get the secret after their representative arrives in this country. Would you not have hurried to the patent office to secure the first protection?”

“I suppose so. And I should have been as angry as you were to find that the other firm had already put in an application for the provisional patent here.”

Magnet motioned mock despair.

“And then Drew can’t understand why I flew at him like a mad dog when he came in here after I had

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

practically confessed failure to him in a nice letter. I staved him off. I hoped there might be some way out, and I wanted to get clear from any connection."

"He's a rare boy. He gave you no rest."

"He's a reckless scamp."

"I rather love him."

"Tell me how it was done," said Magnet. "When I got Bullion's wireless from the steamer I found there was nothing at the patent office. That's what made me go ahead."

"I wasn't taking any risks. By the same steamer that brought Drew there was a letter with the necessary specifications to our London lawyer with a note from myself. They made the provisional application at once. I didn't worry Roger about it; I wanted him to make good. At the same time it was necessary to cover ourselves in case of failure."

"I can't think why you didn't tell him."

"There was no reason why he should know until he was actually in negotiation with a likely purchaser."

"The first question such a person would ask would be as to its protection here."

"That's all right; the thing was done. An enquiry, and an answering cable, and there would have been no further difficulty. I didn't tell Roger before he sailed because I had impressed on him the necessity for secrecy. As you say, perhaps I might have told him that I was making the application but I wanted to give him the impression that no one but himself knew anything about the business at all. I didn't want the thing to be hawked around, or other people to know about it, and I was confident that Roger, being solely

## DIXON WORKS FAST

in possession, would never drop a word except in the right quarters. I daresay if Roger had been one of ourselves, I should have given him the specifications to take to the patent office. He was just an outside friend. I wanted him to centre on selling the invention and nothing else. Besides a lawyer is always better in these matters. It was a little roundabout but I ran no risks. When I got his cable about you I thanked all the gods that be for the precautions I had taken."

"Thanks," said Magnet.

"And now," said Dixon cheerily, "we come to business."

Before the two men separated there had been outlined an agreement under which the British rights of "Fundamental Motorities, Ltd.", in the new invention were to be taken over by Magnet's company at a figure which promised substantial profits to both.

Dixon went up to the St. Claire Hotel at Charing Cross smoking a big cigar, a sure sign that the crush of business was over, and that business had progressed satisfactorily. He rolled the cigar from one side of his mouth to the other as he noted that Roger, glad and relieved at his arrival, showed signs of depression. It was but a minute or so before other indications were forthcoming.

"The sight of you is a tonic, you old rascal," said Roger. "Of course I ought to be confoundedly sorry to see you here."

"And why?" said Dixon.

"A small matter," said Roger, "I've lost you a fortune, that's all. Come over here in the corner of the smoking-room; I've got to talk to you. I hate to do

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

it. Do you know, Dixon, for the first time in my experience I am truly sorry for myself."

"You'll get over it," said Dixon.

"Do you think I'm talking of the money? You're a crazy man. What I'm thinking of is I've lost a friend. What did you trammel yourself with me for?"

Dixon took the cigar from his mouth and said, "Well I've been worried too."

"Of course you have."

"I am a business man, my lad, and I've been worrying whether you were going to try to soak me for more than the commission I promised you. You won't get it, I can tell you that."

Dixon raised a finger and shook it at Roger. "When you took on this job you took on all the bother, and work, and anxiety connected with it, and you are not going to get an additional farthing out of me because you had a lot of trouble. Let me be perfectly straight with you."

Roger leaned back in his chair, and looked at his friend calmly and carefully and then he said, "I always knew that prohibition would play the very devil with a man when he got into this land of freedom."

Dixon got up from his chair, and took Roger by the shoulders and shook him to and fro.

"Blatherskite, what's eating you?"

Roger stood up. There was a great lightening of his heart. His tone and his face, however, were quite grave as he said, "It's not drink and to all appearance, he's sane."

Dixon rippled and shook with laughter. "So you thought you'd done it Roger?"

## DIXON WORKS FAST

“I had a suspicion that way.”

“Well now sit down there, and listen to me for a little.”

In the next fifteen minutes Dixon sketched all that had happened about the business, including his talk with Magnet that afternoon.

“He’s not such a bad chap after all,” said Roger.

“Of course he’s not.”

“And to think what I’ve done to the man.”

“Specially as he’s going to put thousands of pounds into your pocket.”

“How do you make that out?”

“You’ve fulfilled your undertaking with us, and through your approach to him he is going to buy the rights. That means you get your remuneration, as we agreed upon.”

Roger did not speak for a little and then he said, “It only requires the hotel to collapse into dust, leaving us uninjured, to know that I am in a real world.”

Dinner with Dixon that evening was a pleasant meal. With gusto Roger told of his adventures, and he had a responsive audience. Dixon stopped him once, and that was at the first mention of the Defensors.

“The Defensors?” he exclaimed. “Why they’re old friends of mine.”

“You never told me,” said Roger.

“Why should I? And by the way, I’ve fixed you for an appointment with me, and you’ve got to keep it. You and I are invited to lunch with the Defensors at Leathwaite Hall tomorrow.”

“Why, when did you see them?”

“Went down there this morning and had a chat. I

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

suppose I can go to see old friends if I like. You are not the only pebble on the beach. Don't look so surprised. Oh, I know you Roger. You will never confess it, but your vanity is hurt that I went and saw anybody before I saw you. Haven't you any sense of propriety? Ladies first, my boy, ladies first."

Roger screwed up his mouth in curious shape. "You are a sly cunning man, Arthur Dixon."

"All of that," said Dixon.

It was a lengthy telegram which the American sent off to Joan Defensor that night explaining how he had taken the liberty of inviting Roger and himself to lunch next day.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### ROGER AT BAY

“**I** AM very glad to meet you at last, Captain Drew,” said Mrs. Defensor. “We have been seeking for you for a long time.”

Compunction was in Roger.

“I am afraid I’ve been a very stupid man, Mrs. Defensor. Will you let me apologize for the last week or two? I don’t quite know what to say about it.”

“Possibly there are some excellent excuses.”

“I feel like a naughty school boy. I’ve a sense of having been very disrespectful. I ought not to have come here the other day as I did.”

Neither Dixon nor Joan had ever known Roger so quiet as he was throughout the lunch. Mrs. Defensor was truly surprised. Here was no gay buccaneer such as she had been led to expect, but a well-mannered, almost sombre man, who occasionally displayed himself as not entirely at his ease. There was plenty to talk about, and Joan was exhilarated as Dixon, with comment and incident, rallied his friend about his doings since he landed in England. Roger made a smiling reply here and there, but the fire had gone out of him, and he would have been almost unrecognizable to Magnet or to Curfew.

Animation crept upon him after lunch when Mrs. Defensor led the conversation to her dead son, and Roger began to tell his experiences at the front in

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

which Dick Defensor had shared. The high spirits of Dick, his light heartedness, his boyish generosity, these and other traits Roger told about in a running, though somewhat disconnected narrative. Once he looked up and saw Mrs. Defensor gazing at him with a fixity in her eyes which told him a tale more pathetic than tears. Joan broke the strain.

“One of these days Captain Drew you must relate some other things about Dick, his mischief — I know he was mischievous — and about his flirtations, if he ever had any. Don’t look at me like that mother. I don’t believe you knew your son as he really was.”

“Anything I can give you about Dick is yours for the asking,” said Roger. “He wasn’t Sunday-schoolish but he was a clean boy. I know not a single thing about him which I couldn’t tell to you or to his mother.”

Dixon toyed with his glass.

“Shall we go outside?” said Mrs. Defensor suddenly. And each of the others knew she could not bear any more just then.

As they went into the garden Joan took her mother on one side and whispered a few words to her.

“I suppose I’m foolish,” said Mrs. Defensor, “but he makes me want to cry when I hear him talk. I don’t want to be silly in front of him.”

“Suppose you sit in one of the basket chairs under the trees here while I take them round.”

Joan did not wait for her mother’s reply. She turned to the two men and said, “Mother is going to have a rest out here while I parade you round the garden.”

The three began to move off together and Dixon

## ROGER AT BAY

said, "Naturally Captain Drew knows something about this place already. He brought his admiring eyes to bear on it a day or two ago."

"I can stand it again," said Roger with a touch of lightness. They had wandered into the old rose garden when Dixon made his stroke.

"Roger, I'm going to give you a chance to make your explanations and apologies to this young lady for all the bother you've caused her since you came over here as my representative. I'm also a little selfish. I have never seen a beautiful old English place like this before, and I want to ramble round entirely by myself and just drink it all in with my own thoughts about it."

"Oh, we couldn't leave you like that," said Joan hurriedly.

"I'm determined to leave you," said Dixon.

"There isn't need for an apology of any kind from Captain Drew," protested Joan.

"If you hadn't suggested it," said Roger, "I was going to ask bluntly for a few minutes alone with Miss Defensor. I want to speak to her on several matters."

Neither Joan nor Dixon had ever seen Roger so grave, so decided.

"That ends it," said Dixon. "I'll find my way back here in half an hour or so and here goes for a fascinating exploring expedition." He set off by himself.

Joan and Roger found a seat at the end of the garden away from the roses. Shading them was a big hawthorn, the white May flowers of which had dropped away with the full efflorescence of summer, leaving disjointed glittering greenery. Facing them was a stately bed of nodding Canterbury Bells, bordered with

## THE ESCAPE OF ROGER DREW

encircling turf and behind as a background an ivy-clad wall ten feet high was lightened with honeysuckle in full bloom. Away on the right the roses swayed in the sunlight, and sent forth their faintly discernible messages of fragrance. Three or four white butterflies were chasing each other over the Canterbury Bells. The buzz of hurrying bumble-bees spread a sense of happy langour. From the distance came the barking of a collie dog on an adjoining farm. Roger gave a silent sigh.

“You ought to be a happy woman,” he said.

“It is very lovely, but of course the sun is not always shining on summer days.”

Roger turned himself round to face her. “I wanted to add something about your brother, and it is a message for your mother as well as for yourself. Last night before I went to bed I busied myself for a couple of hours in writing out all the little details I could think of about Dick, his frivolities, very innocent ones, how he lost his temper and nearly fought with a brother officer, what he was like when he and the rest of us had to screw up resolution to climb out of the trenches, and also things that his friends and the men said about him. It’s all written out on typewriting paper for you.”

“It was most kind of you to take all this trouble, and I know my mother will treasure it. You would have been able however as time went on to tell us all these things.”

“I have also packed up into a little parcel and addressed to your mother here two or three little trifles I had from him, a book of detective stories, a wire

## ROGER AT BAY

puzzle with which we used to have fun, and an army cap he gave me when I lost mine in action. There are one or two other little things.”

Joan looked at him without saying anything.

“You will get the message and the parcel tomorrow.”

“Why don’t you bring them yourself sometime?”

“I’m going to leave England, and probably I sha’n’t see you for a good while.”

“Leaving England?” said Joan. “Aren’t you going to visit us again?”

“I am not going to do any sensational disappearing trick,” said Roger, “I’ve finished with that. I am just going off to work hard. I have to talk with Dixon to try to fix something up in America. But after all the trouble I have given you I ought to say that if your mother and you want to send word to me, I won’t be out of touch, and if there is anything I can do, or anything I can tell you, you will always be able to reach me by letter. I’ll take care of that.”

Joan knew as well as if he had said the words that this meant his final goodbye to them.

“I’m going to be personal Captain Drew. If you knew the feeling you have inspired in my mother you would not go off in this way. She would like to be able to see you often. We can not interfere with your business arrangements of course, but I wish, if it is possible, that you would tell my mother and me why you think it necessary to leave. Is it presumptuous of me to say that Mr. Dixon has told us that he regards your visit here as a success, and that he looks forward to your staying here to represent him?”

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

"I don't deserve to have such a friend," said Roger; "that's not mock modesty, I simply don't."

"I like him," said Joan.

"He has saved me from a great part of a load of humiliation," said Roger, "and I am going to save myself from the rest. That is one reason why I am going away. There is another; I am going to tell it to you as clearly as possible."

"I want to hear," said Joan.

"After the war I did not come to see Dick Defensor's mother or sister because I knew they were rich people, and I had to earn my living. I guessed that what I did for Dick had probably become magnified in your minds. I did not want to find myself in any false position. The sensible thing would have been to have made one call on you and then to have gone away. I did not do the sensible thing. I can see now I was rather selfish in blotting myself out as if I did not have any natural feeling. Anyway I went off. You know all about that, and it takes the story, so far as you and your mother are concerned, right down to the time you were in New York. I had struggled to make a little money, just enough to supplement my small income, and had wandered hither and thither, never having any strong motive to cause me to look more than a few months ahead. I suppose I was born haphazard. Later, however, some dormant common sense has made itself felt, and I've been casting round for something to which I could devote myself more or less permanently, with a view not only of making money but to showing myself that I was good for something. I

## ROGER AT BAY

wonder if all this sounds somewhat crude to you, Miss Defensor?"

"I am deeply interested," said Joan quietly.

"I can afford to be candid now, and I'm going to let you see my vulgar self before I say goodbye. In addition to other disabilities, I had what is known as the flirtatious temperament, and I fooled about with girls wherever I met them. I am not even a very respectable member of society. An embarrassment with two girls in Cincinnati quickened my efforts in New York, and I fell in with Dixon, who out of kindness of heart put me in the way of the rubber business. I thought I knew myself pretty well, but it was not till I met a girl on the 'Latian' that I realized exactly how I must look to others if they knew everything about me. The girl was yourself."

Joan half rose to her feet. "I did not know — " she began.

Roger stood up. "I've probably tired you," he said. "Shall we go in?"

Joan sat down again.

"I would like you to tell me all you had in your mind, Captain Drew, if, as you say, you are going away."

Roger stood before her as he continued his story. "I saw a tall girl with reserves hiding tenderness and truth. I felt that no discerning person could see her without happy vibrations. She carried understanding and wisdom in everything about her, her eyes, the way she held her head, in her walk, in the tone of her voice. I suppose you think I exaggerate when I say that there was a kind of refined gentleness about her which made

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

a man like me feel I could never get close to her in intimate talk. She was in a different spiritual world. I am not exaggerating at all. I have never been so truthful in my life. Will you please forgive me for saying these things; they are just facts. You won't be bothered again."

Roger forced himself to look at Joan, and found her eyes on his face, saddened eyes, looking through him and beyond him even while she listened.

Roger went on hurriedly, "I am not making any foolish declaration of love as a suitor. I am silly, but I am not so silly as that. I am not going to keep you much longer. I thought I had been tricked by Magnet; the waster was also a fool. Can you wonder that I did not care what steps I took to injure Magnet? I had a perfect passion to get quits with him before I disappeared. Things have gone a bit awry and you've got to know all about it. It's all done with now. Will you let me say, Miss Defensor, I will carry the memory of you wherever I go all my life. I am sure you will like to know it will be for me a good influence."

During the last part of Roger's narrative Joan with her elbows on her knees had dropped her face to her hands. Now at the last sentence, she roused herself and looked at him again. She was very serious and composed but Roger was embarrassed to see a tear running down her cheek.

"I have disturbed you," he said. "I'm afraid I've been very selfish."

"And so you are going away?" said Joan.

Roger bowed.

"I would like to say one thing. I want to add to

## ROGER AT BAY

your list of bad qualities.” She was looking at him squarely now. “You are cursed with pride.”

“Pride?” said the astounded Roger.

“You’re the proudest man I’ve ever met in my life.”

There was something in her face which took Roger’s breath away, although he knew not what it portended. He stood before her helpless, but full of wonderment. Joan herself was staring at him but was quite silent; and she was apparently ignorant of the tear which was wandering unrestrained down her face. She stood up, and then, in a forced way, she said, “My mother and I will always be pleased to see you at Leathwaite Hall, Captain Drew.”

They began to walk together out of the garden. Her silence perturbed Roger. “I do hope I haven’t given you any unnecessary pain. I don’t want you to have any mistaken notions about me.”

She stopped and faced him, and said very steadily, “I have no mistaken notions about you.”

“I fancied you had.”

“I know you well. I knew very much about you when I saw you on the ship, not the history you have told me and all the hard facts, but other things.”

“Yes, I suppose we men carry in our faces marks to be read by an intuitive woman. It doesn’t give me much comfort, Miss Defensor.”

Joan talked on as if she had not heard a word. “Something caused me to suspect that you were not Sir John Magnet when I met you in the ‘Daily Spur’ office, and I was soon practically certain that you were Roger Drew.”

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

"I felt that you knew more of me than I could wish; I felt it."

"I made it my business to find out a great deal more about you, all kinds of things, some of which you are not proud of."

Roger shrugged his shoulders.

"You are a clever man but sometimes you are obtuse." For the first time Joan's voice trembled a little. "I would like you to know how much more I thought of you for that obtuseness."

"I've been stupid in a good many things," said Roger gently. "I ought not to have kept away from your mother and you so long."

Joan had her head thrown back a little but she was not so steady as she looked. As she surveyed this world-bitten man of affairs so many years her senior she had a certain sudden sense of superiority and age, a kind of motherliness to him. It was hard work to keep back the tears as she looked at him.

"I've wanted to know the Captain Drew who was so kind and noble to my brother. And so when I met him — "

"We all have to face disappointments," said Roger with a smile.

"When I met him," went on Joan, "I am almost ashamed to confess it, I didn't think of my brother so much — "

Roger stared at her and wondered what was coming. Roger Drew had met his match at last.

She looked at him unflinchingly, and there was something in her eyes which set Roger's pulses in a flutter. He tried to get command of himself.

## ROGER AT BAY

“I truly hope for your happiness. There’s Bullion — ”

“Bullion!”

In a scathing intonation she has sent an idea crashing to oblivion. Poor Bullion!

Roger felt fire running through him, and knew that he was trembling, and he strove to find a word.

“Do you want to leave me?” said Joan.

He made half a step towards her, and in the fraction of a second before she swayed forward he looked into her eyes and all his plans dropped away, and Heaven came upon him. He put around her a strong arm from which she would never afterwards escape.

“And it is true?” he said.

“It’s been true for some time.”

He guided her back to the seat they had just left, and there was Paradise for five minutes with the roses looking on and the white butterflies still chasing each other above the Canterbury Bells.

“And you’d love me if I wasn’t Roger Drew?” he said presently.

“Yes, if you were plain George Grey or even Sir John Magnet. What of you? Will you marry me in spite of the fact that I am rich?”

“I’d marry you if you had millions,” said Roger.

. . . . .  
Dixon was close upon them before they saw him and there was an assumption of tremendous surprise on his face as he said, “Have you two been deceiving me?”

“Behold Satan reproving sin,” said Roger, as he stood with his arm linked in Joan’s.

## THE ESCAPADE OF ROGER DREW

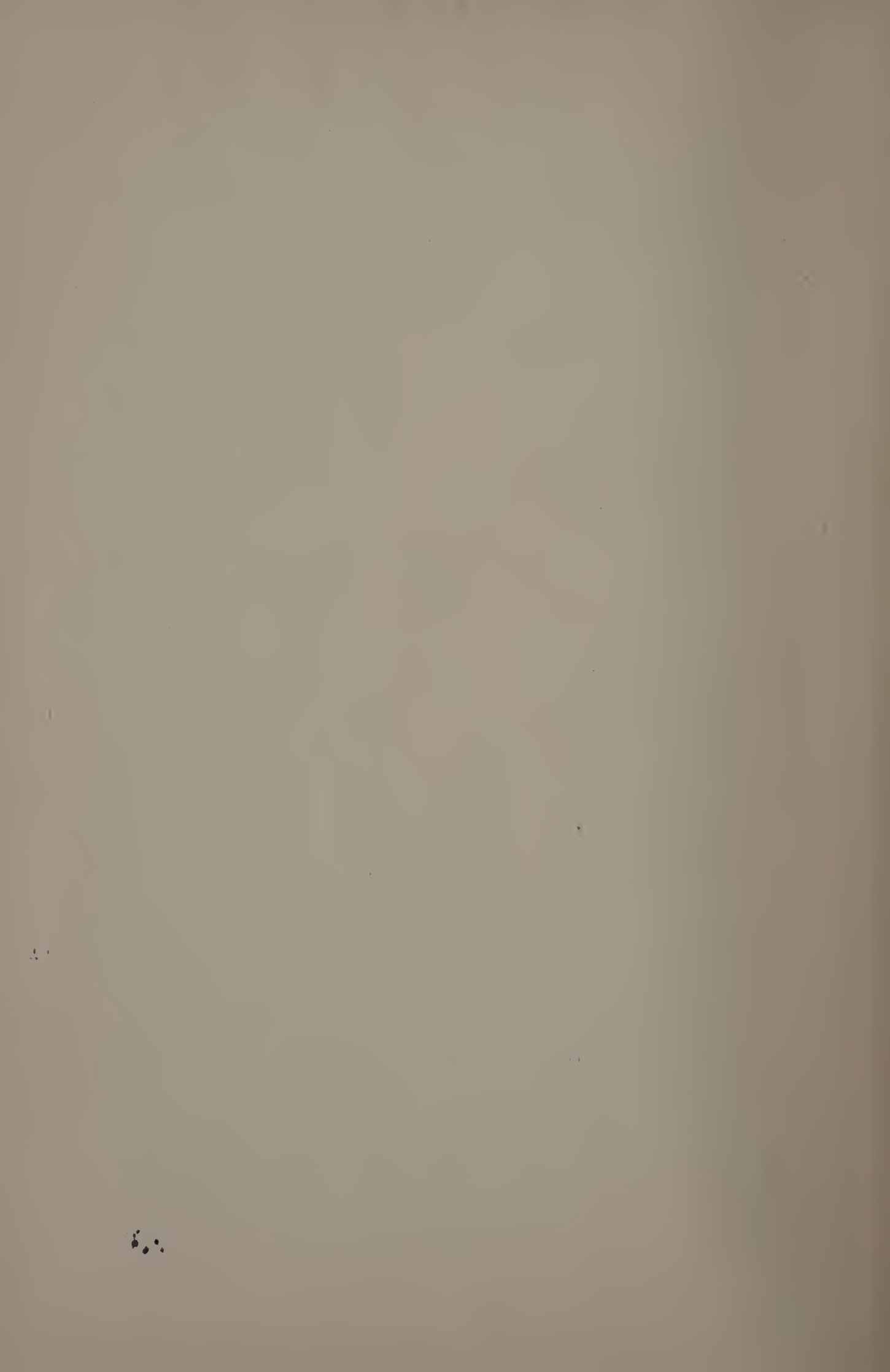
“I want to give you my heartiest congratulations, Miss Defensor.”

Joan took his hand and bent over it and kissed it.

“I ought to tell this young man,” said Dixon as he shook hands with Roger, “that he doesn’t deserve his happiness. I’m sure it will please Miss Defensor best if I say the truth. I believe she will find him worthy of her.”

Joan had no words. She clung to Roger like a child.





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